



Silver Spoon

EDWIN GILBERT



The Innocent  
Ambassadors

PHILIP WYLIE



Queen of France

ANDRÉ CASTELOT



Death in the  
South Atlantic

MICHAEL POWELL

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

The abridgements reprinted in this book  
are used by permission of and special  
arrangements with the publishers holding  
the respective copyrights.

Copyright 1957

By Books Abridged, Inc.

All rights reserved, including the right  
to reproduce this book or parts thereof  
in any form.

3 4

Printed In  
The United States of America



# Silver Spoon

EDWIN GILBERT



AN ABRIDGEMENT

## The Author

EDWIN GILBERT lives in an 18th Century farmhouse in Bridgewater, Connecticut. Mr. Gilbert transferred from the University of Michigan to Yale but left Yale in turn when a play he had written was purchased for production. The play was never produced and another effort lost out when World War II caught Mr. Gilbert before he could finish revisions. However, while in the Air Force he wrote a two-reel documentary war film which won an Academy Award. Mr. Gilbert is married and the father of a four-year-old daughter.



## PART 1: THE LABYRINTH

---

# 1

To reach Glenway, the mammoth country seat of the Gowden family, you follow the highway bordering the Connecticut River until you come to the town of Chaddford, a village of shabbily prim white houses drowsing beneath leafy canopies of ancient trees. Here at the four corners, at that intersection which leads to the squared heart of the town, the old road is blocked off and the new detour begins. For this somnolent and historic town is in the process of being reconstructed and restored to its colonial appearance with Gowden funds. A sign erected by the State of Connecticut tells you that Chaddford will be open to the public by next spring, an American shrine, the sign says; a completely authentic village preserving the architectural heritage of eighteenth-century New England.

Meanwhile travelers must take the detour. But if you are going to Glenway—the townspeople call it Silver Spoon Hill—you do not follow the new highway; instead you turn right at the four corners into Jailhouse Road which dips straight down to the shore of the river.

Near the water's edge, you come to the lower entry of Glenway with its high stone manorial gateposts.

To most Americans, even to someone like the woman who had just driven up to the gateposts, a young woman whose work had exposed her to the estates, offices, factories and institutions of other notable figures, Glenway was a kind of myth-land, the Gowdens a kind of myth-people. Where other families of great fortunes had finally emerged into public focus, the Gowdens remained essentially a behind-closed-doors group, even a rather secret one.

## EDWIN GILBERT

even this was kept modest, never heralded in the newspapers as is the Ford or the Rockefeller Foundation. So that there had inevitably formed around the Gowdens a web of inscrutability and legend: they dwelt in an aura markedly *misterioso*. Of all this, Grace Anders was aware, for she had been thoroughly briefed for the assignment.

She was nevertheless somewhat surprised by the suddenness with which a watchman or gatekeeper appeared from somewhere beyond the foliage.

"Yes, ma'am?"

Mr. Gowden, she said, was expecting her.

"Which Mr. Gowden?"

"Horace Gowden, Junior," said Grace, though more accurately it had been Philip Doncourt with whom the arrangements had been made—Doncourt, the genteel liaison between the Gowdens and the outside world.

Grace Anders was here to photograph Glenway—an unprecedented concession—the pictures to form part of a portfolio series in the magazine *Enterprise*.

The gatekeeper asked to see her credentials. She noticed as she withdrew Doncourt's letter from her bag that the man's zealous eyes were taking swift inventory of the contents of her car: her dark tartan luggage, the specially designed equipment case on which the tripod was strapped; the Rolleiflex camera, the electronic flash unit, the auxiliary lights and reflectors.

She was surprised to see the man retreat to an unobtrusive sentry box. But she waited cheerfully, even with some degree of fascination. Thinking there was more delay here than on the day she'd gained admittance to the Ford plant in Dearborn or to the new General Electric lab or to the American Smelting and Refinery.

"All right, Miss Anders——" The gatekeeper returned to motion her onward.

She started the long, sinuous, uphill drive.

She lit a cigarette, and when she exhaled, her breath came

## SILVER SPOON

in an unwitting sigh. Yesterday was over. Late yesterday she had driven up to her sister's house in a Worcester suburb to be with Susan. Her sister had cordially agreed to keep Susan for several months or at least until Grace could get her life re-established. It was unfair to hold Susan in town during the summer, and expensive too, for you had to have a full-time woman in the apartment. She knew the child would be looked after with affection and care, and that lessened the sense of guilt she always felt at having to leave her.

Now she drove slowly uphill over these sacred grounds of the Gowdens; her practiced eye ferreted out all kinds of unexpected pockets of beauty along the hillside which rose ever higher above the wide green ribbon that was the Connecticut River. At this stage of the ascending drive you didn't think of the Gowdens any more, weren't conscious of them. Except to wonder which one of them was responsible for the preservation of this almost wildly burgeoning show of nature.

It wasn't until she was about halfway up the ever-curving drive, that she again became conscious that people lived here. The main trunk of the road had lesser lanes branching from it, and through the towering glens were glimpses—a fragment of chimney or roof or trellis or wall—of the various houses of the family members.

Before this month was over she would come to be more familiar with the geography of Glenway and would know where each house was and who lived there. For there were no signs, no names.

Later she would know that the first intersection you came to, led riverward to the residence of Teller Gowden and his wife, Ivy. Half a mile beyond another lane forked right to the property of Everett Teller Gowden and his wife, Bettina, and their two small children.

The road rose more steeply and after driving a while you came to yet another road which led to the house of Hester Gowden and her husband, Lerov William Mailenson and their

## EDWIN GILBERT

daughter. And beyond on the high ground to your left, you could see the complex of red barns, silos, stable and the quarters for the farm help and farm manager.

The next residence you passed, far off to the left, was the home of Madeline Gowden and her husband, Avery Trimble, and their small son. Still further uphill was the wooded lane winding to the house of Horace Slater Gowden, Junior, and his wife, Lucy.

When at last she came to the crown of the mammoth hill property, very high above the river, the road narrowed and she followed a long serpentine driveway which kept curving past magnificent red maples and copper beeches, ever curving until she saw, rising above the low roofs of the gardeners' and chauffeurs' cottages, the enormous, white colonial manor house.

This house with its interplay of shadow on white clapboard, its wide-arched, fanlighted entryway, was the residence of Horace Slater Gowden, Senior, and his wife, Cornelia Beekhill Gowden, and their younger son, John Beekhill Gowden.

## 2

At the main house of Glenway a small assemblage of Gowdens was gathered on the east terrace. The group, which also included Mr. Philip Doncourt, for almost forty years the chief link between the Gowdens and the public, was seated in wicker chairs waiting somewhat impatiently.

Doncourt, pink-cheeked, little bachelor of sixty-one, turned when Isabel, the downstairs maid, appeared at the screen doors.

"Mr. Doncourt," the woman said, "Miss Anders is here."

He nodded and faced the group on the terrace. The elder Gowden moved forward in his chair.

Horace Slater Gowden, Senior, at seventy-three was a splendid example of health and longevity. At that time he was

## SILVER SPOON

seersucker with gold watch chain hanging from lapel to breast pocket, he was a man of steadfast gaze, a man whose teeth showed whitely and strongly beneath the thick white moustache.

It was the elder son, Horace Junior, who underestimated the old man's resilience, Horace Junior, who was now saying with concern, "Are you sure you feel up to all of this today, Father?"

"Of course."

Doncourt rose to leave. "If you'll excuse me, I'll get on to Miss Anders." But he waited to add: "I would just like to say that I think these photographs, coming out in a periodical such as *Enterprise*, will appear at a strategic time." Timed, he meant, to coincide with the projected State Senate's commission investigating "current New York real estate operations."

"Perhaps," Gowden Senior said, "but I don't particularly care for this way of going about it. You call it good will, but I wonder if it isn't too indirect? Leonard Fole assures me that he has ways to nip this commission."

Horace Junior shifted uncomfortably on his wicker chair; and Cornelia Gowden quickly said to the old man, "I think we can bank on Philip's opinion. Isn't Philip always right?"

"No one is always right." But the elder Gowden favored Doncourt with an amiable smile. And Doncourt, as it always happened, found the old gentleman's approval warming him as he excused himself again and left the terrace.

Passing through the summer drawing room and into the long central hall, he saw Leonard Fole waiting by the newel post of the curving stairway.

"You might be able to use this, Phil." Leonard Fole extended the familiar green slip of paper on the top of which was the familiar line: *From L. F.*, and which Doncourt knew would contain a brief dossier on the newest visitor to Glenway.

Leonard Fole was a large, knotty man whose bland face was blemished by the tawny birthmark high on his right cheek. He was a hulking man who walked jauntily with cat's tread. His

## EDWIN GILBERT

vancing to the station of personal guard of the Gowden family during the period of the Lindbergh kidnaping scare, moving on after many years to become entrenched in the Gowden Realty Corporation as head of the personnel department, eventually rising to the unofficial rank of major-domo to the old gentleman.

"Thank you." Doncourt took the note, but quietly added: "I doubt, Leonard, if Miss Anders warrants a 'biography,' don't you?"

The man shrugged. "She's here, isn't she?"

Fole's genius lay in his ability to dispose of unpleasantness: trouble, obstacles and threats to the economic welfare of that vast network of operations known as the Gowden Realty Corporation and its subsidiary Gowden Construction; he could bypass the iron rule of unions or city and state laws, soothe and salve the army of building, sanitation and fire inspectors.

The curious thing to Doncourt and to almost everyone else was that Gowden Senior, who no longer needed an aide of the stripe of Fole, should still retain him. Particularly since his son, Horace Junior, had taken over the stewardship of the family's fortune.

Even granting that the old gentleman was loyal to those whose loyalty to him was indisputable and granting that the old gentleman had his own little superstitions, the caliber of the Gowdens was such that a man like Leonard Fole had no legitimate place in their midst.

Yet he remained, his influence still darkly pervasive.

"I'll meet you in the study, Leonard," Doncourt now said. "If you could notify the others meanwhile——"

After the man had gone, Doncourt paused by the curving stairway to scan with amused tolerance this dossier of Leonard Fole's which would, of course, have the familiar ominous ring:

Grace Anders. Born Worcester, Mass. 1923. Parents not living. Father was history teacher. G.A. married to Scott Ramsey 1949. Divorced 1954. One child, daughter. G.A. member Academy of American Photographers (honor?).



## SILVER SPOON

Ex-husband, Scott Ramsey, known Left-Winger, Ruskie-lover. Active for Henry Wallace, 1948 election. Active member American Civil Liberties League. Organized Artists Guild.

Philip Doncourt shook his head, folded the note and tucked it into the pocket of his waistcoat. He proceeded toward the fanlighted front doorway, where Isabel, the maid, was waiting.

He took his place at the portal, his felicitous smile now directed at the young woman approaching the house. "I'm Philip Doncourt. Welcome to Glenway," he said with a graciousness that even forty years could not harden or make perfunctory.

"Thank you," said Grace Anders, extending her hand.

Doncourt was of a vintage which had caused him to expect, somehow, to see a person of manish aspect, with flat shoes and stubby fingers. He found himself, instead, pleased to discover that Grace Anders was a brisk and trim young woman clad in a simple city suit and calf pumps.

"Mrs. Gowden thought you would be more comfortable in the east wing downstairs," he said. "I'll wait for you here in the sitting room——" He dipped his hand gracefully toward the paneled double doors to his left.

After the photographer left, he moved into the sitting room and on into the adjacent study, to see how Leonard Fole was making out with his calls to the various family members.

Through the years, Philip Doncourt had undertaken, among his other tasks, to bring a softer patina to the rough texture of Fole's personality. Fole was much more presentable now, less harsh, overt. In the beginning Doncourt had been touched and gratified at having brought about this change. But now he regarded it as a dubious achievement. For as Fole acquired manners, as he improved his speech and cultivated poise, he also became more adroit, elusive, more difficult to watch, and, hence, even more confounding than he'd been in earlier years.

What joy the man extracted from life seemed to come from his unique power and from the reflected glory of living within

get words a  
woman lay  
well check

done  
open by

clearly  
she left

## EDWIN GILBERT

pleasure, for he was cordially disliked and mistrusted by everyone, except, of course, the Senior Gowden.

Doncourt closed the door of the leather-walled study.

"Well, Leonard," he said, "have you alerted the clan?"

Fole nodded, and folded his hands on the desk.

"I trust," said Doncourt pleasantly, but with the merest sardonic edge, "that you've warned everyone of the highly suspect stranger in their midst? Were you able to track down Mr. John?"

Fole's face puckered. "You know he's never around where anybody can put their finger on him. Why?"

"I'd like to have him on hand," said Doncourt. For, knowing the family so well, he had decided that young John Gowden might be the person to help him soften Grace Anders' impression of Glenway.

## 3

Grace Anders padded barefoot, after her bath, into the bedroom. She heard the tapping on the door, and reached hastily for her striped robe.

It was Isabel. "Is there anything you'd like to have pressed, Miss Anders?" the woman asked from the doorway.

"Not a thing, thanks," said Grace, and, after the woman had gone, she flung off her robe and dressed quickly so that she could have time for a cigarette.

She looked into her handbag. None there. She opened the top drawer of the chest and was surprised to see that the fresh carton of cigarettes which she'd brought along, was not there. She looked everywhere in the suite. The carton was conspicuously missing.

With abrupt craving she wanted one cigarette. She picked up her bag and notebook, slipped the leather strap of the Rolleiflex over her shoulder and hurried from the room.

## SILVER SPOON

would be a silver cigarette box reposing on some table somewhere in this vast establishment.

But when she reached the sitting room she saw no evidence of a cigarette box, or even a match. Nor was Mr. Philip Doncourt on hand. She moved listlessly about the room, deciding to clear out, drive back to the highway and buy another carton.

But she stopped, leaned down, attracted by a white, paper-bound volume on the end table beside the old leather chair. In utter astonishment she saw what she'd never expected to see at Glenway, a magazine of poetry; in fact, she noticed now, there were two magazines. The thin white one was called *Chrysalis*, the other, the blue-bound one, was called *The Brattle Review*. She forgot about the cigarettes for the time. She picked up *Chrysalis*. Absently she sat down in the big chair, placing her bag on the end table.

She had just turned a page when she heard a sound, and looked up to see Mr. Philip Doncourt smiling down at her. "Well," he said, "shall we begin our rounds? Unless you have some special method of going about this? I thought it might be a sensible idea if you could photograph the old gentleman and Mrs. Gowden before the others——"

Grace rose. "No. I'd rather just poke around for a while," she explained as she always had to explain, "meet everybody and just sort of poke. We've got three or four weekends at least." The plan of operation was for her to come to Glenway on weekends only, for that was when the men, most of whom lived in town on workdays, would be present.

"Of course," said Doncourt.

"What I really want, Mr. Doncourt, is a cigarette," she said. "I brought along a carton but it's disappeared somehow."

She saw the diminutive man betray his first concern. "I know I can be frank with you, Miss Anders. I know you will understand." A pause. "I think if you track down Isabel you'll find your cigarettes—oh, they haven't been stolen, it's simply that the old gentleman doesn't——"

## EDWIN GILBERT

He nodded. "It isn't permitted here. The help are instructed to remove any tobacco or—" the smile came faintly—"or hard liquor."

"Yes, I'd forgotten." And her craving was renewed. "What do I have to do, Mr. Doncourt, sneak one behind the barn?"

His laugh came sympathetically. "We'll have to try to arrange something——" almost conspiratorially whispered. "Perhaps later when we visit the Teller Gowdens."

"Which one is Teller?"

"The old gentleman's brother." Doncourt's smile seemed more genuine now. "He—he's our non-conformist."

They had almost reached the rear of the central hallway when she remembered her handbag on the table in the sitting room, and hurried back. As she entered, she saw him—unmistakably one of the Gowdens—saw his lank frame straighten at once as he turned, holding the white-bound magazine quickly behind him, shielding the sight of it.

"Oh——" she said. "I forgot my bag." She crossed to the end table to retrieve her purse. "I'm Grace Anders," she said. "You wouldn't have a cigarette?"

"No——" His cheeks colored faintly.

To enliven the stillness, she said, "Which Mr. Gowden are you?"

"I—" with almost stammering hesitation—"John Gowden."

She said how do you do and started out only to halt abruptly and turn back. "Is that your magazine? I happened to see it before," she said. "I mean, I read one of the things in it. Is it your magazine, Mr. Gowden?"

"Yes," he said, though it came more as an admission.

She couldn't help shaking her head. "I'm sorry," she said hastily. "I didn't mean that it couldn't have been yours—or, well, yes, maybe I did mean that."

Across his gaunt and solemn features there showed the first trace of a smile. The smile was diffident, slowly yielding. He was a tall young man who was too thin and whose ears were somewhat prominent. His face had great mobility: the eyes hazel

## SILVER SPOON

genically his features were deeply expressive, telling much, holding back much more.

"I thought you might have gotten lost, Miss Anders—" she heard the voice of Philip Doncourt behind her.

"No——" She turned. "I've just been talking with Mr. Gowden here. More or less."

"Good," said Doncourt, then facing young Gowden: "Did you get my note, John?"

"Yes."

"Good. Then you won't mind coming along?" Doncourt said.

But Gowden trailed behind as she and Philip Doncourt made their way down the hall, past the great, white banistered curve of staircase. "I thought," Doncourt said quietly, "it would be sensible to have John on hand. He knows Glenway better than any of us. There's scarcely a path or shrub or tree he's not familiar with." He chuckled, glanced slyly back. "I like to tell the story about John the summer he graduated from Harvard Business School, and the old gentleman and Mr. Horace Junior made the error of asking him what he planned to do first. Of course they had a particular post picked for him in the New York office. Well, John hesitated, as he sometimes will, and then he said, 'I want to see if anything can possibly be done about restoring Chaddford, and there are those seven hundred and fifty pine seedlings we got from the State this spring that have to be transplanted.' " Philip Doncourt paused. "They put him off at first, but after a while he got his way. That was quite a blow, I can tell you."

"Yes," Grace agreed politely. "That must have been. You mean that John Gowden is not going to make a lifework of fattening the family coffers?"

"Oh no, not quite that," replied Doncourt with candor. "No, you could scarcely say that. You must realize that when this restoration is finished it is going to bring a new economic health to the area." Doncourt opened the door to the summer drawing room. He smiled uncertainly, peered back to the hallway,

## EDWIN GILBERT

rosy little one, Grace Anders moved across the summer drawing room. When they reached the high screen doors, which John Gowden held open for her, she saw at last the legendary figures in their wicker world, the Senior and the Junior Gowdens.

But what made her arrival seem almost official, even welcome, was hearing the last fragment of the "old gentleman's" conversation, a familiar and reassuring word that crackled through the scented summer stillness: "—taxes!"

After the introductions, there was that period of stiffness you had to go through, that kind of double exposure in which she and the Gowdens tried, through small talk, to appraise one another.

Of the group, Cornelia Beekhill Gowden, a tall but delicately boned woman, was the most animated; she made every effort to make the occasion a pleasant one.

But it was the dog, a lean, handsome English setter who was the most friendly. For he left his position between Mr. and Mrs. Gowden, Senior, to go to Grace, and she bent down and stroked his silky flank.

"I daresay," said Cornelia Gowden, gazing at her dog, "that Winston has been photographed more than any of us." Winston turned his mild, intelligent eyes toward the woman, and then moved gracefully across the terrace to where John Gowden stood.

Everyone watched in silence as young Gowden squatted to rough the dog's head. Until finally, Gowden Senior broke the spell.

"Like to get this over with, Miss Anders," he said, not rudely, but with the air of a man who preferred essentials. "How long will it take?"

She always betrayed a faint impatience, with those who wanted life too readily calibrated. "I don't know," she said.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because, Mr. Gowden"—she faced him levelly, this vigorous man with the clear dark eyes and the elegant thin lips.

## SILVER SPOON

tache—"I suppose I mean you mustn't be quite so grim about it. As if you're in the dentist's chair, or in your office."

"That's a poor comparison, Miss Anders." But the old man smiled a little and the fingers of his right hand tapped lightly on his gold watch chain.

"I was wondering"—Philip Doncourt stood up and inched toward the group—"if perhaps it wouldn't be a sensible idea, sir, if we could place your chair closer to Mrs. Gowden's—more of an intimate——"

"Oh, let's not move furniture," Grace broke in, "then Mr. Gowden might get grim all over again."

"Miss Anders," Cornelia Gowden said, "I shall be eternally grateful to you if you can get one really good picture of my husband. Do you know I don't have a single one except for those old ones of Mr. Gowden in his villainous moustache standing in front of the old building on Wall Street."

Which brought forth from the senior Gowden a warm gleam of reminiscence as he looked at his wife.

And Grace Anders who had already cranked the Rolleiflex, released the shutter. The natural light was flawless.

Horace Junior had turned to his wife, Lucy. "You've seen that old picture of Father, haven't you?"

"Yes," said Lucy Gowden.

So bathed in beatific affection was Horace Junior's face at this instant of reference to his father that Grace quickly recorded it.

"Can we get on with this now?" Senior pinched his nose.

"Horace," Cornelia Gowden said, "don't you know you've been done?" Her laughter came vivaciously. "And Horace Junior, too." She faced Grace again. "Good for you, Miss Anders. That was lovely."

Senior looked relieved. "John," he called.

John Gowden turned from the dog.

"Hadn't you better come over here?" said the elder Gowden to his other son.

## EDWIN GILBERT

ing across the flagged terrace to the old gentleman. Father and younger son. And she could almost see the invisible barriers rise between them. "Oh please don't bother," she said. She knew this kind of portrait would never work out. "I'll catch you somewhere along the line. A little later. Or maybe tomorrow. I'd like to try to work out something different, anyway."

He gave her a thankful glance and moved away to the far side of the terrace.

"Well"—the old gentleman shifted in the wicker armchair which, she noticed, was quite rickety and in need of repair—"if we're through for the time being, I'd like to get to my study." And with a kind of laconic humor, added: "After all, one has to make a living, you know."

The group, except for young Gowden, laughed with genuine merriment at what was obviously an old family joke.

Grace managed another photograph. It would be, she hoped, just the kind of picture *Enterprise* would never expect.

"If there is nothing further——" Mr. Gowden paused.

"There is, Mr. Gowden," she said pleasantly. "My cigarettes were removed from my room and it's only fair to tell you that I'll never finish this job unless I can smoke, which I have every intention of doing."

The expression of faint bemusement drained from his face, and she saw John Gowden turn toward the view; Mr. Doncourt cleared his throat.

"It is your life, young lady, not mine," said Gowden Senior, giving way to his first really pompous utterance. "Philip"—the old gentleman glanced irritably at Doncourt—"can you persuade this young woman to complete whatever it is she——"

"We're complete, Mr. Gowden," she said.

He peered at her. "You understand I must see these photographs before they're published——"

"Believe me, Mr. Gowden, I understand that," Grace said agreeably, and then turning to Philip Doncourt, "I'm ready if you are."



## SILVER SPOON

"John," the old gentleman said, "we have a meeting here at half past four. Mr. Wessels will be here."

"Yes," John Gowden said.

"Oh, Miss Anders——" Cornelia Gowden called. "We're expecting you for dinner. I don't know if Mr. Doncourt told you——"

"I was just going to mention that," said Doncourt, standing by the screen doors. "I've asked John to take us around, Cornelia."

"Oh good. We're dining at seven-forty-five instead of eight." To Grace then, she said, "I've enjoyed this immensely, Miss Anders. You will let me know if there is anything you need, won't you? I'm afraid we don't have as much help these days as we once had. We've all had to learn to shift for ourselves a bit. But it's good for us."

Grace nodded: the woman's statement was, she knew, not really an apology, nor was it spoken with an effort at democratic fellowship. It was uttered out of conviction.

"John"—she heard the voice, this time of Horace Junior—"that meeting is at four-thirty."

"I'll be there," John Gowden answered his brother.

## 4

As the big house receded behind them, Grace could see how John Gowden's eyes seemed to shed their darkness and constraint. Embarked on this exploratory trip of the four-thousand-acre property, he radiated a kind of vivid joy as he guided his jeep through labyrinthine roads and trails, side trails, and green-black, sun-shafted forest, across pine-needled ground, along plunging gorges and out again to great stretches of meadow,

## EDWIN GILBERT

the extensive grazing land of Glenway cattle, past all the houses of Glenway—houses ranging in style from contemporary to colonial to Georgian to neo-Tudor.

"It's going to take me half a lifetime to keep everything and everyone straight," she said as they reached the last residence, that of the old gentleman's brother, Charles Teller Gowden.

"She won't forget Mr. Teller, will she, John?" said Doncourt, stepping from the jeep.

"Uncle Teller is—well, he's quite different from most of us." John Gowden's tone was rich with affection as he gazed at this residence, the most informal of all, a large and rambling structure converted from an old carriage house.

It wasn't until Philip Doncourt left them to go on ahead (as he was to do at each house, to set the scene as felicitously as he could for the visitor) that John Gowden suddenly turned in his seat to face her.

"I meant to say before," he began haltingly, "I hope you didn't let my father disturb you too much—it, it's a way he has sometimes——" The desperate apology was wrenched out with effort, but he looked relieved for having uttered it.

"I only hope I didn't disturb him too much," said Grace, not for the sake of tact, but mainly to try to lighten this curious burden that John Gowden had carried from the beginning.

"Oh, no—no—you were—well it was wonderful the way you went about it."

"John——" Philip Doncourt had returned. "John, I've called for another car to take Miss Anders and me back." He smiled with a knowing kindness. "I'm afraid it's almost four-thirty and that meeting——"

"Yes," John Gowden said shortly. But then, glancing over to the large rambling country house, he said with subdued pleasure, "I'd like to have stopped in. Will you say hello to Teller and——"

"I already have," Doncourt replied, and went round to open the door for Grace.

"I must tell you, Miss Anders," Doncourt said after Gowden

## SILVER SPOON

drove off, "in case you weren't aware of it, that you seem to be making an impression on our people here. Being asked to dine at the Seniors' is not as common as you might suppose. Luncheon or tea, yes. But seldom dinner."

"I know," she said to please him, "and I'm that impressed." She had discovered that with families like this it was almost a tradition to reserve the evening meal for the inner circle—one of the few remaining rituals they still sustained.

She knew, however, why she was being given this treatment, why the gates of Glenway were so graciously open to her. And she also knew how readily, inevitably, they would be closed to her again.

"Tell me about the Teller Gowdens," she said, lingering near the car. "I suppose I'll be seeing them again at dinner, so——"

"No." Doncourt almost whispered it, tugging now at his tailored waistcoat. "You see, Mr. Teller and the old gentleman—that is, being brothers, don't always see eye to eye. You know how brothers can be. Nothing serious, simply a divergence of taste, you might say."

"Oh yes," she said. "Now I remember."

"The old gentleman," Doncourt tried for a lighter vein, "calls this place The Smokehouse! A family joke, you might say."

She sorted out more facts from the documentation Edgar Devlin, the senior editor at *Enterprise*, had given her: the two brothers, Teller and Horace Senior, had maintained through the years a frostily silent relationship, doing business always through an intermediary like Doncourt or Fole or, she suspected, John Gowden.

Charles Teller Gowden, Princeton '05, had in the past speculated daringly in the market, had gained and lost several sizable fortunes, had always been bailed out by Horace Senior. But Teller Gowden had never shown a conscientious interest in the family's complex realty operations. He had even committed the one cardinal sin: dipped into the principal of that estate which had come down from his father, the late Joshua Slater.

## EDWIN GILBERT

had been as prodigious, thrifty and skillful at money-making as was the ancient founder of the family fortunes, one Jonathan Gowden, whose father, Eben Gowden, had begun in Chaddford in 1739 as a Yankee peddler of tinware and assorted household goods. . . .

"I promise you, you'll find Mr. Teller delightful," Doncourt said.

They moved on to the house. "You'll be meeting Teller's son and daughter-in-law at dinner tonight." Doncourt knocked lightly on the door. At once, as if she'd been waiting there, a uniformed maid admitted them into the foyer.

"I'm back, Bernice," Doncourt said.

She nodded, glanced impatiently at Grace, then led them through a narrow passage studded with prints, and up three steps into the huge, informal living room.

"Ah—come in, come in, my dear boy." Charles Teller Gowden, shorter and stouter than any of the other Gowden men, put down his cocktail glass and rose from the deep, rumpled chintz wing chair by the fireplace. "You're just in time for a refreshment." He turned to his small, thin wife. "Ivy, can we replace these ice cubes with some wholesome undiluted gin?"

"Miss Anders," Doncourt spoke in mellifluous tones, "this is Mr. and Mrs. Teller Gowden."

"We've been expecting you, Miss Anders." Ivy Gowden's accent was conspicuously elegant.

"Sit down, my dear girl," said Teller Gowden. He was a dark-haired collegian of seventy-one in gray flannels and a black blazer on the breast pocket of which was embroidered the faded remnants of a Princeton emblem.

Looking at him Grace found it almost impossible to associate him with his older brother. After his wife had passed a cocktail to Grace, Teller Gowden sat down nimbly and from the pocket of his black blazer brought forth his tortoise-shell cigarette case which he opened and extended to Grace.

"This is a novelty," said Grace, taking one of his cigarettes.

## SILVER SPOON

He struck a match and held it for her. "You're going to spoil me, Mr. Gowden," she said.

"That's why we're so popular, you know," said Teller Gowden and contentedly sipped his cocktail.

"I really think, Teller," said his wife, "this had better be your last."

"Nonsense. After all, I haven't been photographed in—I believe the last time must have been at Princeton—the day we whipped Harvard."

"Mr. Teller was captain of the tennis team," offered Doncourt.

Grace put down her drink and said that she'd like to look around. She roamed the huge, raftered room with its chintzy comfort and its array of silver trophy cups. She saw, squared off in a vast clearing among the spruce trees, the five tennis courts which, she supposed, Teller Gowden maintained out of remembrance of his youth or because he liked to watch others play.

"Who uses these courts?" she asked.

"Mr. Teller," Doncourt said, from his chair near the fireplace.

She looked back at the man, trying to conceal her surprise. "Who do you play with, Mr. Gowden?" she asked. "Is your son——"

"No," said Teller Gowden a little wistfully, "no, I nab John now and then or Leroy when I can get him——" He paused. "But Everett is not much of a man at the net. He's too busy." He tapped his cigarette against the tray. "Now what is this we're up to? Are we all going to pose for you?"

"No, not today," said Grace. "I'm just meeting everyone. You can call it casing the joint."

She had sorted out the rumor or legend now: Ivy Gowden had been Ivy Erskine, a remarkable little woman fragile and quiet, who'd been a music teacher. When Teller Gowden's wife had died, he had married Ivy Erskine, despite every pressure of the family to prevent it. Though she had lived at Glenway

## EDWIN GILBERT

all these years she had never been invited to dinner by Cornelia Gowden, not even to lunch. Mrs. Gowden, Senior, had called on her, still did, but that was all. It was said that this polite and gracious ostracization was at the wish of Horace Senior, not Cornelia.

Everett Gowden's young wife, Bettina, hurried into the room.

"Sorry to crash in on everyone," Bettina Marsh Gowden said, "but Everett is trying to get to that meeting and he's left his glasses——" She laughed, glanced at her mother-in-law. "You know how unlike Ev that is."

"Yes." Ivy Gowden rose at once, however, and began an urgent search.

"Imagine him ever forgetting anything!" Bettina Gowden said to Teller. "Oh!" She noticed Grace for the first time. Teller made the introductions.

"Here they are." Ivy Gowden held up the horn-rimmed glasses which she had found on the window table.

"Thanks." The young woman retrieved the glasses.

Bettina Marsh Gowden, whose father was president of a railroad, was a very pretty girl, who, Grace thought, was a person of considerable freshness and charm, but a Foxcroft alumna who was probably beginning to discover that beyond riding and horseflesh, her life could be tiresome.

"My dear girl——" Teller beckoned to his daughter-in-law.

"I really have to toot," said Bettina Gowden.

"Nonsense," Teller Gowden protested. "You know if Everett loses his glasses, he'll be the better for it."

"He does need them for the meeting." She tapped the glasses against her jodhpurs. "And I've got to change."

"Are you wearing the gray dress?" Ivy Gowden asked the girl with a curious earnestness, as if, not going to the Senior Gowdens' herself, she wanted her daughter-in-law to appear there to supreme advantage.

"Any luck, Betts?" Everett Teller Gowden had come into the house. He was a young man of middling height, with alert purposeful eyes and sparse light hair

## SILVER SPOON

"Found them." Bettina Gowden held up the glasses which her husband quickly took from her. "Ev," she said, "this is Miss Anders——"

"How do you do, Miss Anders." Everett Gowden smiled graciously. Then he turned to Doncourt. "Phil—is John trying to make the meeting?"

"Yes, he's left," Doncourt said.

On hearing this, Everett Gowden started swiftly for the hallway. "You know how Uncle Horace is about being on time. Come on, Betts." He nodded to Grace. "You'll excuse us, won't you, Miss Anders?"

"Everett," Teller called, "what would happen if you ducked out just this one time? Why don't you and Betts stay? We've got fresh blood here today——" He grinned over at Grace. "And I think it would be a dandy idea if——"

But the young man was rushing swiftly onward, followed by the slender dark-haired girl in the white shirtwaist and jodhpurs.

Teller Gowden leaned back in his chair. "My son," he said, "thinks I'm a wastrel. Would you believe that?"

"Teller," Ivy Gowden said.

"He does." Teller smiled resignedly. "He wants to measure up, wants to pay more income taxes than any of us, bless him. Glenway fever, eh?"

Doncourt cleared his throat and made a movement to rise.

Grace studied the brick fireplace. She said, "Do you think John Gowden has the fever, too?"

"John? Oh no. We mustn't wish that on him," said Teller Gowden. "I regard him like another son, keep after him all the time: no surrendering, boy! is what I keep telling him."

It was nearly six o'clock when the chauffeur brought her and Philip Doncourt back along the red-mapled approach which led to the great white domestic shrine of the Senior Gowdens.

When Grace returned to her bedroom in the east wing, she kicked off her mumps and sat down at the small table.

## EDWIN GILBERT

She heard the tap on the door, and padded across the room. She opened the door to see Isabel standing there holding a package.

"Mr. John," said the elderly maid, almost with furtiveness. "Mr. John asked me to take this to you."

When the woman had gone, Grace tore off the wrappings of the package. She saw three objects: a carton of cigarettes, and the two volumes of verse. She thought, in her surprise, that possibly at Glenway there existed one true host.

## 5

To John Beekhill Gowden, these meetings in his father's burgundy-hued, leather-walled study, like so many other meetings in the offices of the company or in the house in New York, were almost always a dreaded challenge.

It was nearly four years now since he'd gone on leave of absence from H. S. Gowden and Sons Realty Company; and though he retained one of the vice presidencies and attended board meetings, his time and energy were devoted to his restoration project.

His discomfort sprang from knowing that he had to guard against losing his temper or allowing himself to say anything that would give the others a chance to contradict or disparage him.

You had to put up a show of strength, make a creditable showing in the face of inter-family competitiveness, no matter what you felt. If you loved your father, or tried to, you had to make every effort to please him or at least not to agitate him unduly; you had to simulate genuine interest in the corporation's business.

The principal subject of today's meeting happened to be one



## SILVER SPOON

in which he was interested: the square block of dilapidated, low-rent apartment buildings known as the Shinwell Block.

He glanced up at the half-circle of men spanning away from him: from his elder brother, Horace Junior, to his young cousin Everett Teller Gowden, to his brother-in-law Leroy Mailenson, to the attorney Wessels, to Leonard Fole, to Henry Osgood, his father's ancient, chief secretary—an arena of enemies, he had often thought when these meetings convened, though that did not include his brother, Junior, who was essentially a modest but purposeful replica of his father.

"Perhaps it will save time," he heard Senior saying, "if Lee could bring you up to date on this, John."

John looked over to his brother-in-law Lee Mailenson; Lee, whose independence seemed so enviable, who had such an easy air of superiority despite the fact (or possibly because of it) that his marrying John's older sister, Hester, had been an open act of opportunism.

"As you know, John," Lee began in his soft Virginia tones, "we've been planning to erect the Pan-North Insurance Building on the west half of the present Shinwell Block. Yesterday afternoon Pan-North informed us that the plans will have to be changed. It seems they now wish to build a plaza and a convention hall alongside the main building. In other words they now need the entire parcel. So the east half of the Shinwell Block will now have to be torn down, too."

"The east half is where we hoped to take care of some of the tenants when we tore down the west section. There are over three hundred families in the Shinwell Block," John said. "If we tear the whole block down what's going to happen to them?"

"That is the problem," Lee said.

"Have you a suggestion, John?" Senior asked.

"Well—I haven't had much chance to think about it——" he faced his father. "But—what about—couldn't the old Larkin Corner be rehabilitated? It's empty, I believe. And it could accommodate the Shinwell tenants."

## EDWIN GILBERT

"The Larkin Corner," Everett Gowden now spoke, "the Larkin Corner, John, is no longer empty."

"It isn't?" John turned to his cousin.

"No," said Everett. "You see, I took that property over six months ago. We're converting it to commercial space." And then he added pointedly: "I assumed you knew, John."

"We mustn't forget," said Senior dryly, "that John has been absorbed in Colonial Chaddford."

"Yes, of course." Everett smiled at his uncle, acknowledging the pleasure of having Senior as his ally.

This obsession of his cousin's, John thought, could be maddening, this drive to star, to outshine him, to win the old man's approval. He said, "Could we delay tearing down the east half and allow at least a part of the tenants to move in there until some suitable space can be found elsewhere?"

"Of course not, John," Everett said. "We couldn't possibly jeopardize this kind of deal."

"I understand that," said John. "But there are still three hundred families who have to be located somewhere. You can't evict them."

"You can evict them," the attorney Wessels said, "but the process is too slow for a deadline like this."

"Eviction is an academic joke," Senior said. "The landlord is always wrong, don't you know that, son? Since the time of Mr. Roosevelt the position of the landlord is laughable."

John nodded: his father's contention was as familiar as it was deeply felt.

"As a last resort, Mr. Senior, the other half of the Shinwell Block could be condemned," Leonard Fole said. "Then it will not be our responsibility at all."

"We can't do that," John said. "If we're collecting rents from the tenants there is no way to get the building condemned."

"Isn't there?" Fole said.

"No," John said. "And anyway you can't do anything like that, no matter what political or legal methods——" He stopped before Fole's smug, implacable gaze; he knew that Fole

## SILVER SPOON

if he chose, arrange to get the Shinwell Block condemned and shake off for Gowden Realty the considerable cost of relocating the displaced tenants.

"The Shinwell tenants——" Fole said, embarked now on the familiar, beloved crusade: "The Shinwell tenants have always been a bloody headache, Mr. Senior. We owe them a bit of consideration, yes. But what we are up against there is Ruskie agitation. You've got chaps down there who have been agitating the tenants ever since they were notified the buildings had to be torn down."

"Now just a minute," John said. "I won't have this, Fole. You can't make communism the issue, not this late in the game. It is not only too obvious, but it won't work. Not any more. There is no legitimate means of justifying condemnation."

"John is quite right," Horace Junior interjected. "We can't do anything like that, Leonard." Junior turned to the old man and said with gentle concern, "Father, there's no need for your being bothered with this. If you feel you want to get some rest before dinner, we can——"

"No," Senior said briskly but with affection, "I want to see this settled." He fixed his attention on John.

"As far as I am concerned"—John spoke more forcefully now, still enraged, apprehensive over Leonard Fole's earlier assertions—"I refuse to have any part of our trying to combat this on a political basis or by any other dubious methods except that of fulfilling our legal obligations. It's important to me—to us that we set up a relocation system for these families. It ought to be begun before this tenant agitation gets out of hand."

"I do think, Mr. Senior," the attorney Wessels said, "that John's approach is sound. Strategically speaking, with the State Senate investigation due in November, it would be unwise to risk stirring up public sentiment. I know what relocating these people will involve, it's apt to be costly. But I suspect we'll be in worse difficulties unless we do the job thoroughly."

"I agree," Horace Junior said firmly.

## EDWIN GILBERT

end: the image of Grace Anders came to him without warning, and he wondered where she was now, what her impressions of Glenway were. . . .

"What astounds me"—Senior leaned back in his chair—"what astounds me is that one can do business at all these days. In the face of this mania for investigations, one would think that business had become a dishonorable occupation."

John hunched back into his chair, waiting grimly for the familiar topic to be talked out.

"Yes," Everett was saying, "but the irony is the percentage of the tax dollar that supports these investigations."

Senior nodded. "The shabbiest politician can make a name for himself simply by victimizing any corporation he chooses."

"Righto!" said Fole.

And John stiffened: the mere sound of the man's voice, the acquired British clichés of his speech, caused him to stir combatively. "What about some of the other investigations?" he heard himself say. "I don't know why we keep saying this is something new. What about the New York City and State investigation committees in 1885? And the State Tax investigation in 1890—or in 1924 and 1925?"

He regretted the outburst at once, for in striking out at Fole he had also caused his father displeasure. He braced himself against the old man's attack.

But his father suddenly smiled. "John, I didn't know your memory was that keen. That's very good. You're showing some ginger today." He gazed at him with sudden fondness.

"Where are the children?" he asked then.

The meeting was over. Chairs were edged back.

"Everett"—the old man looked over at his nephew—"where are those little scoundrels? I don't want to miss them again."

"They're out on the east terrace," said Everett. "Betts and Nana are with them." He spoke with pride. For he had provided the old man with one of his few delights: small children. Madeline's son was now eight and Hester and Lee's daughter seventeen, and Horace Junior's son had died.

## SILVER SPOON

tral hallway with its welcome scent of summer flowers he could not shake off the unpleasant stigma of the meeting.

"Hi, John—is it over?"

He turned to see Everett's wife, Bettina, looking a little forlorn or bored, sitting on the bottom step of the great curving staircase.

"What?" He wanted to get up to his own quarters.

"That meeting's been an eternity," said Bettina, rising. "Is Everett still in there?"

"Yes." He moved to the stairs.

"Please don't tear off." Bettina moved to him. "You'd think Everett was being knighted in there. He thrives on meetings, doesn't he? You're the only one who manages to escape. You and Teller, of course." That wistfulness which he'd come to notice in her young face recently was more pronounced: she stood close to him, slim and dark in the slate-colored dress, a single strand of pearls around her throat. "Honestly, John," she went on with a constrained gaiety, "sometimes I think I'm married to a meeting. It seems to be all I can ever remember. My father was a meeting man, too. But Everett is an utter glutton, isn't he?" With a spontaneous movement she reached for his hand. "Why can't somebody get him to relax?" She laughed without much mirth. "Isn't it funny—about you and me? If we hadn't utterly hated each other at first sight that first time in Cambridge——" Bettina stopped, withdrew her hand.

For Everett had stepped out from the double doors of the sitting room. To stand there, again holding his glasses, looking at her, saying nothing.

John moved back and his cheeks colored. This was not the first sort of desperate overture Betts had made. "I'll see you at dinner, Betts," he said.

She nodded and joined Everett. "Is it true, John," she called, "Grace Anders is dining with the clan?"

"Yes." He touched the urn finial of the newel post.

"Umm." Bettina looked up at him. Her smile was warm

## 6

The weather on June fourth, the second weekend of the assignment at Glenway, was almost flawless. Grace had come down from Worcester Friday night so that she could get an early start the following morning. On the previous weekend, though she spent some of her time visiting and observing the members of the family, it had been the terrain itself on which she had concentrated her photographic studies, the farm area, woodlands, meadows, streams and river shore; and she made a number of portraits of individual trees, including, at John Gowden's suggestion, the huge-girthed oak on the east side of the main house—the "Miles Oak" as it was called.

At nine o'clock that Saturday morning, the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Horace Slater Gowden, Junior—a smaller scale colonial replica of Senior's house—was in full function: breakfast had long been served; inter-Glenway phone calls had been made; the cook was preparing for tonight's dinner; the houseman was waxing the dining table; Loman, the chief gardener, and his helpers were grooming the grounds.

And Horace Junior, ashen-haired, gray-suited, was seated near the garden, intent on his vigil of business.

Lucy Willard Gowden, of the ever-rougeless plump face and the graying hair, emerged from the rear of the formal white house. "Horace——" She approached her husband, who was reading beneath the gnarled apple tree. "Horace, dear—that was Philip who called. He's bringing Miss Anders over now to photograph the house——"

"Oh, yes." Horace Junior removed his spectacles. He put down the twenty-page report. He was not displeased by the interruption. He was tired. He smiled up at his wife, this plain

## SILVER SPOON

woman who had always been a comfort to him. "You can't say that girl doesn't go about her job promptly, can you Lucy? Will I be needed? I suppose I will."

"Yes," Lucy assured him, stood there sturdily, comforting. "But you will have to put on something else. Phil suggested something more—sporty. There might be more pictures of us, I expect."

"Yes." Horace Junior carefully folded his glasses into their case, carefully folded the report, and rose from the peeled-bark rustic chair. "John coming along, did Phil say?"

"He didn't say," Lucy answered, and added, with a faint smile: "Though I imagine he will, don't you, the way he's been tagging after her." She paused. "You know both Betts and Madeline said the same thing—they've never seen him show this much open interest in any girl——"

"It wouldn't be natural if we didn't have to worry about John, would it?" Horace Junior said, as they started across the lawn. "But I know John—and Lucy, I'd suggest you not nag him about it, it's the surest way to make him go contrary. It should be ignored."

Inside the cool shadowed house which he and Lucy had lovingly furnished with the English pieces his mother and hers had given them, he moved through the central hall to the front staircase. He looked up: dread invaded him. Energy. If he could only summon more energy. Those steps. The staircase loomed formidably every day. But he started up now, not wanting Lucy to suspect.

Before he reached the halfway mark he had to stop. He was breathless, disturbed again by the hard thumping in his chest.

"Is anything wrong, dear?"

He turned, startled. She was in the hall below, watching him.

"No. Nothing, Lucy——"

"Horace——" She hastened up the stairs, touched his arm.

"Horace, I really think you worry too much about it," Lucy pleaded with concern. "Dr. Knowling as much as told me you

## EDWIN GILBERT

did. If you let yourself concentrate on your heart all the time it's bound to make it worse. You must stop thinking of it, Horace. You really must, dear."

She knew too well, Horace Junior reflected. She knew the way his mind could work. But she didn't know everything, nor would he tell her. He thought of the results of the last cardiogram—six weeks ago when Knowling had urged him to move his bedroom to the first floor, to avoid the stairs.

"I'm fine." He summoned a cheerful smile. "I'll be down in a few minutes—what shall I wear, Lucy?"

"Horace, dear——" His wife peered at him, not moving. "You're still gray as a ghost. Now please, dear, just put it out of your mind. Why don't you put on that tan Shetland jacket we got in Glasgow two years ago? You've never worn it and it's so becoming——"

"All right. Thank you, Lucy," he said in a curious burst of gratitude. He did feel somewhat better, soothed by her sturdy, steadfast concern. "That's a good idea."

Briskly he left her and started up the remaining stairs. Briskly, to show her and himself that this spell he'd had on the staircase was merely one of his own making.

But by the time he reached the second-floor landing and started for the bedroom suite, he had to slow down. His breath rasped hard. He had to bend forward, lean his head against the doorjamb.

Slowly the tightness in his chest eased, the constriction gave way. Tomorrow morning, while they were at church, he'd have Alex, the houseman, set up bedroom quarters downstairs next to the study. It had to be done carefully and unobtrusively, no one but Lucy would know.

For, the instant the others heard of it, there would be a fuss, and it would at once get back to his father. His father had to be spared any knowledge of this, at seventy-three he had to be spared every unpleasantness, every worry.

How unfair, unreasonable it was, he kept thinking as his



## SILVER SPOON

normal breathing returned, how senseless that he, who had made it his life's pride to relieve his father of the enormous burdens—that he should be the one stricken with a faltering heart.

As he entered the chalk-blue bedroom, removed his coat, his eyes fell upon the silver-framed photograph on the marble fireplace mantel: Horace Slater Gowden, III.

A brooding overcame him as, against his will, he dwelt upon the little boy with the big ears, the lad in knee-length pants who at the age of eleven had been taken from him and Lucy. Bulbar poliomyelitis. 1943, the summer they'd gone to Washington.

Stop. Stop, he warned himself, and put his hand to his cold, prickling forehead. He looked away, tried to distract his brooding thoughts, tried to examine the cluster of high paper-birch trees beyond the windows.

What was it he'd come up here for? What had Lucy said?

Glasgow. Yes. That coat.

Slowly he went to the cedar closet of his dressing room, and slid open the door.

Downstairs, awaiting the arrival of Grace Anders, Lucy bustled about without direction. Her customary placid contentment was ruffled. Horace did not look at all well. She fought off the grave thoughts which held her. But Horace's blanched face, his rasping breath remained disturbingly vivid. And Dr. Knowling's warnings . . .

Perhaps she should not have allowed Grace Anders to come over, but if she canceled it now at the last minute, it would expose her concern for Horace, and she knew that would be a mistake.

The telephone was ringing, and as she started for the entrance hall she caught sight of the black sedan turning into the road which led to the front driveway.

Lucy reached the phone. "Hello—" she said, and waved away Mildred, a maid, who'd come down the hall to take the

## EDWIN GILBERT

call. "Oh, good morning, Madeline— what? Yes, they're just arriving. Why, I don't know—I'm just wearing what I always wear—that's what Miss Anders suggested—what?" Lucy peered through the side fanlights to the car which now crackled across the crushed-stone parking area. "No—John doesn't seem to be there——" Lucy smiled, grateful for this diversion of pleasant, harmless morning gossip with her sister-in-law. "Yes, I was sure he'd be along, too—— Do you really think so? Of course, she is attractive, but after all"—lowering her voice then—"but what do you suppose she's after?—— Yes, that's what disturbs Horace. She must be out for something—— Yes. Well, I'll phone you as soon as she starts for your place—— Tonight? No, we'll be here. Dr. Raymond and his wife are coming for dinner—he's president of that women's college, it's about those new dormitories—— Yes. All right, Mad, I'll let you know——"

Lucy hung up: no matter how long she'd known her sister-in-law, Madeline, she never really knew her. There was something about Mad that put you off, you could never really get close to her at all. Of course Mad was younger than she, but even so. She was an odd one.

"Good morning, Phil." She greeted Doncourt who stood at the threshold. "My, you *are* early, aren't you?"

"How are you, Lucy?" Phillip Doncourt said in that way of his, as if your welfare mattered above all else to him.

"Phil," she said quietly, "when you see Horace, do tell him how well he looks. He needs it. He's not at all up to par, but try not to let on. I'm trying to instigate a campaign to keep him from worrying about himself." She stopped. "Oh, good morning, Miss Anders."

"Good morning," said the photographer, who had reached the threshold.

Really remarkable, Lucy thought, looking at the girl: that fresh appearance of hers, when you realized it had been past two A.M. when she'd come back with John last night.

## SILVER SPOON

Lucy had heard the account of late hours from Betts; Betts had got it from Everett, who had been informed by Fole, of course. Fole was quite loathsome, though he did keep you abreast of what was going on.

"I thought John was coming along, Phil," said Lucy then.

"He said he was busy," Doncourt reported.

Lucy sought the face of Grace Anders: it told her nothing.

"Good morning." She heard her husband's voice behind her.

The others greeted him, and Phil Doncourt said, "You're looking very dashing today, Horace."

Lucy looked at her husband: his gray-streaked hair was neatly brushed, the tan Shetland jacket was really becoming.

Grace Anders was saying: "How are you, Mr. Gowden?"

Horace Junior smiled, though you couldn't fail to see how self-conscious he was.

Lucy, wanting to spare him further delays, said, "If you could get through with us first, Miss Anders——"

"The trouble is"—Grace Anders squinted up to the east—"I have to take my orders from the sun, and shoot the house exteriors while I can," she said. "If I can clean this up quickly, there'll be time to get you and Mr. Gowden in the garden." She turned to Doncourt. "Mr. D., would you like to give me a hand?" She motioned to the chauffeured black sedan in which her equipment was stored.

Lucy turned to her husband. "Well, dear—why don't we go back to the garden. I'll have Mildred bring you a glass of skimmed milk."

Horace nodded and took her arm.

"You do feel better now, don't you, Horace?"

"Yes." But there was effort rather than conviction in his voice.

"It's such a glorious day," said Lucy, over her alarm.

And as soon as he was settled in the chair, she excused herself and hastened back into the house. In the pantry she told Mildred to bring the milk out to Horace Junior. She hurried into the study to telephone Dr. Knowlins. She would invite

## EDWIN GILBERT

Knowing to dinner tonight, have him come up from New York. It was last-minute notice, but Knowing would come, busy and distinguished as he was, he would come if the patient's name was Gowden.

# 7

A mile downhill from the Junior Gowdens', in a vast hollow of woodland cut off from the river view, stood the stone residence of Madeline Gowden Trimble and her husband, Avery Thomaston Trimble, and their eight-year-old son, Thomaston.

Where now, before noon, the three of them were being photographed standing before the white entrance door, on the threshold of the ivy-matted house—Madeline, vividly blond and of patrician profile, in a straight thin tweed skirt, dusty-pink cardigan, a single strand of pearls circling her throat; Avery in a suit of dark brown, and little Tom in his first long-pants Junior Brooks suit.

Grace Anders released the shutter, and at once Madeline stepped forward.

"Are we finished now, Miss Anders?" Madeline asked impatiently, rudely.

For she knew, even now, that the house would soon be empty and she'd be alone, and whenever that happened the old battle with herself would begin again.

Somehow she held Grace Anders to blame: it was meeting the photographer, envying her her free-wheeling life, imagining her alone in foreign cities, that had started Madeline's unwanted compulsion ticking off . . . and even now she was pushing back the first dark warnings. "Will that be all, Miss Anders?"

"Yes," said the photographer, working the small crank of the Rolleiflex.

## SILVER SPOON

Madeline took a deep breath, turned to her son. "All right, Tommy"—she spoke with false brightness—"here we go."

Helena, the woman who looked after the boy, waddled out from the house carrying the last of Tommy's camp equipment, and helped Avery stow it in the trunk compartment of the dark blue Buick.

Madeline took the boy's hand as they walked to the car. "You will write to Mommy, won't you, darling? One of the counselors will help you——" She opened the door.

"Mommy——" Tears abruptly welled in the boy's eyes, and he buried his head against her skirt. "I don't want to go!" came the muffled cry.

"Now, Tommy——" Helena hurried over.

"What kind of a little man is this!" said Avery with gruff cheerfulness, though his blunt, square face was uneasy as he lifted the boy into the car.

"Well"—Madeline turned to her husband—"goodbye, darling." She kissed the cool lips, and with her fingers touched the granite coolness of his cheek.

"If you want to reach me Monday," he said, "I'll be at the bank in Philadelphia at ten." He started around to the other side of the car. "I'm stopping off first to say goodbye to Senior and your mother——"

"Mommy——" the boy whimpered. She leaned across the door and snuggled his head against her.

"You'll have a wonderful time, once you're up there, darling," she said. "You've been begging to go all year, haven't you?" He stopped crying. "Haven't you, darling?"

He nodded, and she kissed him once more, and shut the door. She felt wretched and ridden with guilt for letting him go, for the truth was that she had fostered the idea to begin with. She knew she should have kept him at Glenway for the summer. She felt she ought to spend more time with him, and yet she couldn't bring herself to do it.

It was the easy way out, a way of forgetting her maternal  
lapses, a way of putting off

## EDWIN GILBERT

She waved now, as the car backed up, and shielded her eyes from the sun. "Don't burn up the roads, General," Madeline called, summoning with a smile the nickname which her husband pretended to dislike.

He frowned back at her. "Be good, dear." The car moved swiftly out of the driveway and up the long slope to the main Glenway road.

It was over. It was better this way. Madeline turned, dreading to face the empty house. She crossed the drive to the spot where Grace Anders was setting up the tripod and view camera. "Won't you have some coffee, Miss Anders?"

"Thank you. But there isn't time." Grace Anders looked up anxiously to the sky.

"I'm terribly sorry if I was rude before," said Madeline then. "But we had to rush so, and Avery was barking at all of us——"

Grace Anders swiveled the camera into position. "It must have been rough seeing the boy go."

"Yes," said Madeline. "And having to put up such a cheerful front about it, you know."

The girl nodded.

"Are you sure I couldn't give you a cup of coffee?" Madeline felt desperate for company. "I thought John would be along today," she said. But Grace Anders did not answer. "I think John is still peeved with me," Madeline went on, not wanting to go inside. "He adored this house—it was originally built for an Episcopal archbishop in 1797, and John had great plans for restoring it as a historical landmark. But Avery and I took it over for ourselves. Avery was raised in an old stone house outside Philadelphia, and he couldn't resist taking this place over. John's never forgiven us. He claims there are very few stone, end-chimney houses in Connecticut. We had a hideous battle and——"

But the photographer was intent on her work.

Madeline moved toward the house.

Inside, in the square white stair hall, she found Philip Don-

## SILVER SPOON

"Have some coffee with me, won't you, Phil?" Madeline said when he'd hung up.

He nodded: ever co-operative and affable little Philip. "If we have time," he said.

The maid served coffee to them on the roofed terrace at the rear of the house with its vista of the sloping woodland, thickly green with spruce and hemlocks.

For an hour Doncourt provided entertainment. Her nervousness was beginning to subside.

Until he left with the photographer to go on to Hester's and Lee's.

Madeline sauntered restively around the big cool house again, too preoccupied with that same unshakable envy of Grace Anders, who could do what she chose when she chose. . . .

It was Grace Anders whose presence at Glenway had brought on this whole seizure. . . .

Madeline went to the kitchen and told the cook to take the rest of the day off. Then she went into the library.

She stood there in the center of the wainscoted room.

The Governor Winthrop desk was open. Avery's papers and documents neatly sheafed: how neat and ordered his life was. Unlike all the other men of the clan, Avery kept himself uninvolved in the politics of Gowden Realty of which he was secretary and treasurer. His position was dully inviolate. She often wished it weren't. She often wished he possessed those qualities she had thought he had when she'd first met him during the war, when he'd been General Trimble: the one star gleaming on the square shoulders. . . .

She picked up the *New York Times* from the desk, put it down. She picked up the *Middlebury Banner*, a regional newspaper devoted to the news of surrounding towns and villages.

Her fingers tensed, stiff with nerves again.

TONIGHT  
EVERYONE'S GOING TO THE ELITE  
CONNECTICUT'S

## EDWIN GILBERT

Madeline stared at the huge ad. Tonight. What harm? She could call her mother now. And she had a perfectly reasonable excuse to duck out of dinner at Cornelia's too. She looked over to the phone on the Marlborough table. She called the Senior's house.

"Hello?" She heard the brisk voice of Mrs. Kevins, her mother's secretary.

"How are you, Mrs. Kevins? May I speak with Mother, please?" Madeline remained standing nervously by the table. Her palm was moist against the telephone. Presently she heard her mother's lively voice. "Oh, Mother, this is Mad—do you need any help with the subscription list for the Hamilton House dance?"

"I do. Decidedly," said Cornelia at once. "I was just going to call you. Betts is here too."

"I'll be right over," said Madeline, and the thought of again being by Cornelia's side, helping with her good works, filled her with a cozy and rewarding warmth. "Oh, Mother—would you mind if I begged off on dinner tonight? I really ought to be in Hartford—I'd forgotten, but with Tommy leaving me, and Avery—I'd forgotten——"

"Hartford?"

"There's that reception and dinner the Wadsworth Atheneum is having—you remember—Avery was supposed to go, he's a donor."

"Oh yes. Yes, of course. You ought to go, darling."

"Well—" said Madeline, "all right. I'll be right over, and give you a hand, Mother."

Madeline's relief was instantaneous. She tore out the large ad from the paper and folded it. Why not? An outdoor movie. It would be a harmless excursion, even silly.

It might rid her of this unwanted impulse. And if anything happened, well, then it had to happen.

Where was it again? She unfolded the fragment of newspaper. Which highway? Yes. She knew; she'd passed it on other excursions. Tonight. Nine o'clock.



## SILVER SPOON

She left the library to go upstairs to the master bedroom for her bag and gloves.

# 8

They had been riding, Lee Mailenson and his daughter, Page, keeping the horses gently trotting along the north-south bridle trail of Glenway.

"Daddy," Page called, "we're late for lunch. Miss Anders is already here."

They brought their horses in at a walk to the front of the long sweep of glass-sheathed contemporary house which was notched into the hillside, oriented to a commanding view of the curving river below.

Lee let his eyes hold on the seventeen-year-old girl, the slender body erect in the saddle, the reins in her left hand, her feet now resting in the stirrups. She was very tan, and her short light-chestnut hair was windblown but not wild or sloppy. He watched her dismount, pat her horse affectionately, as Ross, the groom, strode over to lead the animals back to the stable.

Lee dismounted, turned his horse over to Ross.

"Hello—sorry we're late." He greeted the photographer who was setting up her camera about fifty feet from the house. He waved to Phil Doncourt, who was seated in the black sedan.

"Mr. Mailenson"—Grace Anders looked over at him from her tripod, her gray eyes squinting at his jodhpurs—"you seem to be the only real sportsman at Glenway—outside of Teller Gowden."

"That's correct," said Lee, facetiously adding: "But it's what you'd expect of someone from the decadent South, isn't it?"

Grace Anders turned to study the glass-walled, flat-roofed house. "This is quite a decadent plantation of a house."

## EDWIN GILBERT

so many of them, you truly are, Mr. Mailenson. I mean, when you emancipate yourself from your background you do it with a capital E, don't you?"

"You're wrong there. I'm doing a poor job of emancipating." He nodded toward the house. "That architecture is deceiving. At lunch I think you'll get fried apples and ham and, unless I'm mistaken, cornbread. I'm no rebel when it comes to my stomach."

"I hope you won't mind if I eat and run," Grace Anders said, and swiveled the view camera into place. "Oh—and please don't change your clothes." She laughed. "The whole world, including me, will be frustrated if we don't get to see someone in jodhpurs. It's a cliché of the worst kind. But——" She paused. "Thank Heaven, you haven't let me down. You and Teller Gowden. No, that's not altogether true or fair. Mr. Gowden, Senior, didn't let me down, nor did Gowden Junior. They fooled me."

"How about John," Lee heard himself ask, "did he fool you, too?"

Grace Anders turned abruptly, squinted up to the sun.

Lee beckoned to Philip Doncourt. "Lunch, Phil?" he called.

Doncourt emerged from the black sedan and joined them as they started toward the house. This residence of Lee's, more than any other of his accomplishments, was the one which gave him the most gratification. He enjoyed observing the expressions on the faces of guests and visitors who saw it. It told people, with its defiant and handsome architecture, that Lee Mailenson could not be easily molded to Gowden demands or tradition. It also told people that he had married Hester Gowden with no cheap ulterior motives. And though this was not quite accurate, he nevertheless needed to believe it, or have others believe it. The truth lay somewhere between these two extremes, as truth most often did.

The reward of the marriage was his daughter, Page. Page illuminated his world—now darkened by the sight of Hester in the entrance foyer. "Hester" he said.

## SILVER SPOON

regional humor he disliked, "I think everyone's more than ready for some of Violet's victuals——"

"Hello, Miss Sanders," said Hester, a smile hovering uncertainly on her lumpy childish face.

"Anders, Mother," corrected Page behind her.

Lee led the photographer into the living-dining area—no drawing room, no ancient paneled walls gloomily Gowdenesque in this house of his: the ceiling white and clean, the vast stretch of clear glass exposing the green, sloping land to the Connecticut River, the white brick fireplace-wall which divided the living and dining space.

"Miss Anders," said Page, "the Little Girls' is just off the foyer——"

After Grace Anders had departed, Lee went on to the north end of the house to his bedroom to wash up. When he came out to join the others, they seated themselves at the teakwood table.

Lee watched his daughter sit down to his right in her jodhpurs; blue kerchief tied around the young throat. He turned to face Grace Anders to his left, this young woman with the straight smoky yellow hair. He unfolded his napkin.

"Miss Anders, I've been thinking—I'd like to talk to you sometime about a building we're planning to put up in New York——" He looked over at Doncourt then. "Phil, I was thinking of the Pan-North job—we ought to have a first-rate photographic record of the whole process from excavation to final completion——"

"Yes." Doncourt unfolded his napkin as the colored maid entered the room with the jellied soup. "Yes, that's a sensible idea, Lee."

"You could take on an assignment like that, couldn't you?" he asked the photographer.

"I might," said Grace Anders, "but I'm not sure if I'm going to be doing much of that kind of work any more."

"Of course you are," said Lee.

## EDWIN GILBERT

blance between her and Page; they were unlike, yet there was that same resilient structure of body and modeling of the mouth and that same forthrightness about each of them. . . .

What was it Fole had reported about her?

Grace Anders, he saw now, had turned away, obviously not caring to pursue the topic of photography.

"I've got to save enough time to get another look at your paintings, Mrs. Mailenson," Grace Anders was saying to Hester.

"Oh"—Hester's hand fluttered chinward—"you don't really have to bother seeing them if——"

"Yes I do," said Grace Anders.

"I wish," Page broke in, "you'd give Mother a push, Miss Anders. I don't see the point of all that work if she refuses to have an exhibition. She won't even sign her name."

The name, Lee thought again, that plagued her and all the others.

The maid brought in Hester's special menu: yogurt with scrambled eggs garnished with wheat germ. And shortly the others were served the fried apples and ham, tomato aspic and cornbread.

"You were serious, weren't you?" Grace Anders said to him then.

"I most certainly was serious," answered Lee. "And if you could come in to the office for a preliminary talk to——"

"No——" Grace Anders laughed, glanced down to her plate. "No, I meant about the ham."

"Oh." His smile came thinly over his disappointment. "Of course."

"Mr. Doncourt"—the colored houseman, Lemuel, came into the dining-area—"telephone for you, sir."

"Excuse me." Doncourt rose and left the room. And Lee bent to his ham and forked up the succulent fried apples.

He passed the basket of cornbread to Grace Anders. "Have another one and butter it while it's hot," he said.

"That was Mr. John," Doncourt said on his return, ad-

## SILVER SPOON

dressing Grace Anders. "I told him you'd most likely be at the Everett Gowdens' by three."

"Oh?" said Grace Anders.

Lee watched her. He couldn't define what he saw, except to know that a subtle change had come over her. What had Fole reported? She was divorced. Yes. She had a child, a daughter. And she still maintained contact with her ex-husband. All this John must know, too.

"Mrs. Mailenson"—Grace Anders looked up from her empty plate—"you wouldn't snitch on me if I had a cigarette, would you?"

"What?" Hester said. "Oh no. Please do, Miss Sanders-Anders."

"I'm afraid," said Doncourt then, "that we are getting pressed for time."

Lee reached over, picked up the matches and lit her cigarette. As he shifted to lean forward, his knee brushed against Grace Anders' leg. But even as the quick alien sensation shot through him, he knew he could not allow it to linger. Yet, when her leg did not move, a sudden irresistible impulse caused him to prolong the contact. . . .

Until he realized that Grace Anders had not even noticed, that evidently she'd been preoccupied. For as soon as she exhaled the first stream of smoke, she briskly shifted in her chair, and rose.

Lee felt a surge of relief that she apparently hadn't noticed what he'd done or tried to do, this unprecedentedly juvenile, or middle-aged act he'd committed.

But even as everyone left the table to start for Hester's work-room on the lower level, that initial sensation was unrelieved, lodged in his chest. He lingered behind the group, watching her: her body, the posture and the walk, too, were like Page's. He had sublimated too many of his yearnings in Page, he thought now, and, finding himself confronted by the fact for the first time, was appalled.

# 9

On the lower slopes of Glenway nearer the river shore the residence of Everett Teller Gowden and his wife, Bettina Marsh Gowden, and their two small children, stood.

Within the Georgian colonial house, Bettina Gowden, dark-haired and slender in her summer dress of chalk-blue linen, moved across the entrance hall, through the drawing room to the door of Everett's study where he was in session with John Gowden.

"Ev—she's here." Bettina entered the room.

"She is?" Everett rose from his chair.

He was thankful for the interruption: John had put up this fool pretense of showing up here to discuss the relocation problem of the Shinwell tenants instead of admitting it had been Grace Anders he'd come to see.

"Honestly," said Bettina, glancing out to the driveway, "would you look at that entourage!"

He followed her line of vision, saw Grace Anders stepping out of Lee Mailenson's car, saw Doncourt leaving the parked black sedan to meet her.

"John"—Everett turned to his cousin—"I'd say Lee is sort of stretching that Southern hospitality, wouldn't you?"

John turned away from the window. He was not amused, though Everett was: the remark was unfunny and deliberate, his small pleasure came from seeing the effect it had on John.

"Come on, John——" Bettina took his hand, and, in that teasing way of hers, added: "There's someone outside you've simply got to meet."

"Betts—are the children ready?" Everett broke in irritably.

"Nana's getting them dressed," answered Bettina, and moved out of the study, hooking her arm around John's.

## SILVER SPOON

It was her way, Everett thought uncomfortably, that kind of open playfulness. But he couldn't help feeling that she was deriving some sort of vicarious pleasure from it.

Whenever it happened, it left him mystified and smoldering with resentment. For this was a good marriage. Like Senior's, like Horace Junior's. This was a good marriage, his and Betts'.

He was proud of her, and proud of himself for having won her. She had an immense capacity for gaiety, she was a first-rate mother to the two children. She had the esteem of his uncle Horace and his aunt Cornelia and the Juniors. His uncle Horace had served on the directorate of the railroad of which Betts' father had been president. Above all she had tried to understand the burden he had to carry: his father, Teller.

For Everett there could be no one but Betts ever, he assured himself. So that her recent discovery or rediscovery of John was slowly creating in his mind the first threat to his dedicated life. But that threat, he thought now, was being blocked, at least the extension of it. For now there was a Grace Anders.

He hurried out of the study eager to welcome her. At the threshold he caught up with Betts and took her arm, leaving John behind.

"Hello, Miss Anders." Everett offered his winning smile when he reached the photographer at the black sedan where the chauffeur was unloading the equipment.

"What's happened to John?" Betts was saying.

"John!" Everett called back.

Waiting, he could not help contemplating, as through the photographer's critical eyes, his residence.

Fiercely unlike his father Teller's rambling, sloppy, converted carriage house was this formal, stalwart Georgian colonial reproduction of white clapboard.

"If there is anything you need," said Everett, "or if any of our people can help you——"

"Nothing right now," said the photographer, who stood beside the tripod, surveying the house and the

## EDWIN GILBERT

John Gowden appeared from the entrance, his tall thin frame clad in the usual brown jacket and narrow, unpressed gray flannel trousers.

"Long John—hey, Uncle Long John!" from the front door. Everett's daughter, Cornelia, aged four, charged forth calling the nickname she'd given John since the day they'd played pirates together.

Now Horace Everett, aged five, hurried out, followed by Nana—Mrs. McLain.

John turned and crouched down to let Cornelia climb onto his back, her little hands gripping his neck. It was trivial, Everett knew, but the sight always irritated him.

"It's my turn!" demanded little Horace, tugging at John's legs.

"Giddyup—please, giddyup!" cried Cornelia, and John started off with her toward the formal, brick-walked garden at the right side of the house.

"Miss Anders," Everett said, "do you want that front door open or closed?"

But the photographer wasn't listening. Everett was disconcerted to see her abandon the view camera, and, adjusting the Rolleiflex which hung from her shoulder strap, hurry off to the garden after John and the children.

"Oh," Betts enthused, "won't that make a perfect love of a picture!"

"Yes." Everett frowned and removed his glasses. "Unless someone gets the captions all wrong."

"Captions? Oh." Betts laughed. "I hadn't thought of that: 'Mr. Everett Gowden at play with his children'—wouldn't that be a hilarious boner!" And Betts moved away to the garden.

He stood there, helpless and irritable, as he saw Grace Anders rapidly take picture after picture of John and the romping children, and Betts. He regretted having encouraged John to come over. He had visualized with intense gratification the pictures in *Enterprise* which would show his house and family: he saw it all as a companion piece alongside the photographs of his uncle's residence.



## SILVER SPOON

The pictures would be an endorsement in color of something he could never allude to directly. Despite the energy and accomplishment that marked his position with the company, he was constantly nagged by the same suspicion: people regarding him as just some Gowden relative who'd been given an easy berth.

In prep school, at Harvard, in the offices, among strangers or new business associates, someone—there was always someone who had to ask: "Which Gowden are you?" He'd been forced since boyhood to push his way to a new identity; every act of his had been dedicated to effacing his father and stepmother, to becoming socially, morally and philosophically aligned with the Senior Gowdens.

He'd succeeded: at Harvard that success reached a first peak when John had introduced him to Bettina Marsh. They'd become engaged and six months after commencement had married. A second peak. For the marriage was the one specific act that admitted him readily into the Senior orbit. Bettina did not need his money; she was, moreover, not only personable and attractive, but her family's tangential financial interests with Horace Senior made her seem dazzlingly desirable in his eyes, the kind of illusory sensation that could pass for love.

But something had happened and he had no way of knowing how or when. A graph of the marriage would have indicated a subtle downward curve. He never looked to himself to account for it. He looked, as he had always done, to John.

So that, with the advent of Grace Anders to Glenway, he had found himself at once hopeful her presence would work for him. And now he felt that a whole new area was shaping up, you could see it plain as the figures on the big board of the Stock Exchange.

Now Everett bestirred himself and started purposefully to the garden. "Betts," he said quietly when he reached her, "can't you get this organized?" He peered distractedly at the children

## EDWIN GILBERT

us—not this. I've got to get over to Uncle Horace's for a——”

“Ev”—she turned to him—“if you get yourself into another of those meetings I'll never speak to you again.”

“This is not a meeting as such.” He took her arm and walked her back toward the driveway. “I won't be too long. It's just a question of——”

“For heaven's sake, Ev, when are you going to learn that your uncle Horace happens not to be God?”

“Betts.” He removed his glasses, dismayed and surprised by this outburst of hers.

“Well, I mean it,” said Bettina.

“Why this whole sudden new——” began Everett.

“It isn't sudden or new,” protested Bettina. “It's been getting me down for I don't know how long.” She gazed over to John and the children. “Why can't you learn to relax?”

“Like John, you mean?”

“I mean—well, yes, like John.” She touched her dark bangs.

“I can't afford to. And you know it,” he answered bluntly, honestly. “Betts”—he lowered his voice—“I'd like to ask you something. Since when did you decide that John is the great paragon? What's happened? You used to detest him——”

“I never detested him. No one could,” Bettina said.

“That's not how I remember it.” His voice tightened. “At Cambridge he was all yours, but you——”

“Oh, Ev, what are you trying to say?”

“Nothing.” He strode off into the house. Though his anger was directed more at himself for having exposed a weakness, yet he was glad he'd brought the issue out in the open. Finally.

In the hallway he turned to look back. Grace Anders was posing Betts and the two children in the garden, and John stood behind the photographer trying to get the kids to smile or laugh. He kept screwing up his face and pulling at his ears.

And Everett's temper flared again. He hastened from the house determined now to organize things quickly and the way he wanted them.

## SILVER SPOON

"Miss Anders," he said when she'd finished, "I have to be over at the Seniors' shortly, and I'd appreciate it if you could finish up with me and——"

She nodded. "I'm sorry—I did get sidetracked, didn't I? Just give me time to do that façade and then we'll get around to the family group."

"I don't want to hurry you," he said more gently now, for he wanted the photography of the house to receive the artistry it deserved. He saw Mrs. McLain diverting the children.

And then he took Bettina's arm. He smiled. "Peace offering," he murmured.

"Skunk," Betts whispered back. But smiled. And his well-being was momentarily restored.

"Say, John"—he turned to his cousin—"you're not forgetting about tomorrow night——"

"Tomorrow night?" John said. They walked back to the driveway where Grace Anders stood at the tripoded camera.

"You know," Betts said, "the party for Lucinda Bayles."

"Oh yes," John said.

Everett turned to the photographer. "We're expecting John to bring you over, Miss Anders."

"You'll bring Miss Anders, won't you? We're counting on it," Everett turned back to John. "What do you say, old man?"

"Yes," John said.

Relieved, though not surprised, Everett gripped Bettina's arm more firmly and, followed by the children and Mrs. McLain, he led the way back to the pillared entrance of the house.

"Honestly, Ev!" Bettina said as they waited inside while Grace Anders prepared to photograph the exterior.

"Honestly what?" said Everett, knowing.

"The way you're fixing this up, you'd think John was the long-lost chum you loved most in the world." She paused, glancing outside. "I never suspected your talents as a match-maker. How come, Ev?"

## EDWIN GILBERT

"Oh, you know John." He kept his laugh good-natured. "If someone didn't give him a push every once in a while he'd get bogged down and——"

Betts peered at him. "I think Grace Anders is probably doing something of a job herself."

"Do you really think so, Betts?" he asked without betraying interest.

"Look for yourself." Bettina nodded toward the driveway.

Following her gaze, he was at first distracted by the sight of Philip Doncourt getting into the rear seat of the sedan.

"Poor old Long John," he heard Bettina say.

Everett watched now, and at once saw her meaning. It couldn't have been more specific: John stood near the photographer, not talking, but looking at her, his gaunt face, the shy dark eyes arrowed at her.

"Yes," said Everett out of his boundless pleasure.

# 10

Two events occurred that Saturday night which were to have repercussions far beyond their first disturbing impacts; they happened sometime between nine and eleven, unknown at the time to those present at dinner in the main house: Cornelia and Horace Gowden, Senior; John Gowden and Grace Anders; Bettina and Everett Gowden, Hester and Lee Mailenson; Philip Doncourt and a Mr. and Mrs. Burden Chiddsey and Mr. and Mrs. Bryan Alsop Birwyck from New York.

Madeline Gowden Trimble drove swiftly along the highway which rose gently northwestward from the Connecticut River Valley.

The violet haze of summer's dusk had yielded to nightfall.

## SILVER SPOON

She saw the drive-in theatre far in the distance: *ELITE*. The neon letters beckoned.

She let the unabashed excitement stir within her, savoring it. These excursions of hers happened all too seldom, really. You had to make the most of them, savor every second to compensate for the time that marked your other way of life.

Lord, she hadn't been on one of these private safaris for months. The odd thing about these little trips of hers was that they really did make her life more tolerable, heightened her pleasure as both mother and wife.

It was always the same prior to these trips. Just as today, after Grace Anders had taken the pictures, she had worked happily with Cornelia in the morning and after lunch. But beneath her contented labors had been the prospect of this private excursion tonight. Of course the family at large believed she was now in Hartford at that affair the Atheneum was giving. It was a simple deception.

Not that either its cause or its justification was simple. No one knew better than she what made her set out on these episodes, and there was no moral indictment anyone could make that was more stern than that which she imposed on herself.

She didn't particularly console herself by thinking of the others: of the four Gowden children, only one of whom, her elder brother, Horace Junior, had been content to mold himself in the shape or substance of Senior and Cornelia. Her elder sister, Hester, had turned away, inward, to painting. Her younger brother, John, had been unable to conform. But the manner of her own escape was less laudable, and more difficult for it had to be concealed.

Long before her tenth year she had become conscious of the difference between herself and other children. From the beginning almost, she had found herself trying to reach out for one kind of life that could replace or make more endurable the other. Friends, the other girls she knew, would visit her at Glenway or at the family's house in New York and then would

## EDWIN GILBERT

see the fully equipped playroom on the top floor or the walled garden at the rear, enviable and private playgrounds, and they would always think she was the luckiest of girls. They couldn't be expected to see beyond or understand how you needed to get away from walls or servants or governesses, away from the consciousness of your name, away from the persistent warnings and admonitions of your mother and father—Senior, with his perhaps unwitting disinterest in his daughters, lavishing his concerns on his sons; Cornelia with her busy round of good works.

To Madeline the house had become a stockade.

Madeline found her only release in fantasy, living two lives, one on a level with her classmates, the other within herself and, whenever possible, with strangers: her game became one of assuming anonymity, going into buses or stores or movies merely for the special pleasure it gave her to have contact with those who did not know who she was, and to hear what they said to her, to do all manner of things which had been stamped forbidden because "people will know who you are." They were harmless, these games, she had thought. But, as she grew older, as she tried to give them up, she found they had become ingrained.

There was one period when she made herself break the pattern. That was at Wellesley. Here her association with men was kept within her own orbit. In her second year she had her first affair.

In 1945 she met Avery Thomaston Trimble—General Trimble, as he was called then. He was, of course, markedly distinguished in uniform, and the war had endowed him with a vigorous and mature sort of glamour. He was eminently eligible; there was no problem about money, his family and hers were spiritually and financially akin.

It was curious about Avery. After the marriage and once he was out of uniform, he was like a man she'd never known. Oh, he was a perfectly decent husband and he couldn't have been more solicitous of her. The fact was he did not relieve the deadening pall of her life. She had become his wife, the next

## SILVER SPOON

of his son. There was absolutely nothing she could do about it. Two years after her boy, Tommy, had been born she found herself once again reverting to the old impulses.

In the residence of the Horace Gowden, Juniors, it must have been about eleven o'clock when the telephone rang, and presently the housemaid stood at the open doors of the drawing room.

"A call for you, Mr. Junior," she said.

"Thank you, Eunice," Horace Junior left the bridge table. In the entrance hall he picked up the telephone. "Yes?"

"Mr. Gowden, this is Mrs. Quinn——Mrs. Trimble told me to call you if——"

"Yes. What is it, Sally?" he said to the woman, the gardener's wife, who was Madeline's housekeeper.

"It's about Mrs. Trimble's wallet. Somebody's found it, and they telephoned here just now, I took the number and all, but I wasn't sure what to do about——"

"Wallet? Where—who was this, Sally?" Horace asked, lowering his voice.

"I've got it all down," the woman answered, and there was a prolonged wait. "It's a Mr. Goldstone, he said he is the manager of—the Elite Drive-In——"

"The what?"

"It's a movie place—an outdoor movie place, Mr. Gowden."

"That couldn't be right," said Horace. "Are you certain? I believe Mrs. Trimble went to Hartford, there was a dinner——"

"Yes—but this Mr. Goldstone has the wallet and he wanted Mrs. Trimble to know. He said he could mail it or hold it until someone——"

"Did this Mr. Goldstone say how much was in the wallet?"

"Yes, almost a hundred dollars he said," reported the woman.

"I see." He wrote down the information.

## EDWIN GILBERT

not one to be careless. If it had been Hester—Hester was always losing jewelry or money—but Madeline—Avery was away and she had gone to Hartford.

It was very curious. Well, this was something Leonard Fole could take care of. He'd call him now. There was no way of reaching Madeline.

"Anything wrong, Horace?" Lucy called.

"No—nothing, dear." He could not discuss the matter in the presence of the guests. "I'll be right back."

Quickly he started up the staircase to the second floor. He'd make the call from his rooms. He had almost reached the landing when he was forced to stop; he gripped the balustrade.

Shocked, he bent forward desperately trying to relieve the stabbing grips of pain in his chest. He remained cramped in the same position, fearful of standing erect, fearful of making a sound. Until, blessedly, the breathing eased and the indescribable pain subsided. Slowly he straightened up and after a while slowly made his way to his and Lucy's suite.

He switched on one lamp by the welcome chair. He did not want to make the call. But intuitively he knew he had to. He dialed the number of his father's house. Yes, Fole would dispose of this, this puzzling, somehow disturbing matter of Madeline's.

The call had scarcely been completed when he turned to see Dr. Knowling standing in the open doorway, his black bag in hand.

"Let's have a look at you, Horace," said the man softly and moved toward him.

# 11

The procession of visitors to Horace Junior's house began on Sunday morning before church; the news which he had wanted



## SILVER SPOON

to keep hushed had, of course, already reached the various households.

Horace Senior and Cornelia were the first to arrive, along with John Gowden. After a prolonged talk with Dr. Knowling and Lucy, Cornelia went in first to see her elder son, followed shortly by Senior and John.

As he crossed to the bed with his father, John felt a surge of relief to see that his brother, propped high against three pillows, looked alert and perfectly healthy.

"I told Lucy not to bother you about this, Father," Junior was saying to the old man.

"Never mind about that, son. You'll be on your feet as soon as you've had a decent rest. You've been overworking. Knowling tells me this is nature's way of warning you." Senior, in churchgoing suit of somber gray, stood close to the bedside, his hands locked behind him; the anxiety which had marked his face earlier was remarkably concealed.

Junior smiled over at John. "You can do me a favor if you keep Father from getting fussed over this."

"Yes," he said. Looking at his brother now, seeing at closer range in the clean light the ravages Junior's dedicated life had left on his face, the stringy, hollowed throat, the ashen, pinched cheeks—seeing this John condemned himself for not having done his share, for letting Junior carry the chief burden.

Senior stooped down and gripped Horace Junior's shoulder. "You'll be in shape again soon. I know that. Not worried about it at all. You've never let me down yet, have you?"

"No." Horace Junior gazed at his father with fervent resolve.

"I'll be by later if it's all right with you, Horace." John shook his hand.

"Fine, John. Thanks." As they started to leave, he said, "Father, you'll take Lucy to church with you—she said she wouldn't go, but——"

"Of course she'll go," Senior assured him, with a brusque smile.

## EDWIN GILBERT

quickly the mask of hearty cheerfulness left his father's face, the old man walked along beside him, through the study and sitting room into the entrance hall, silent, reflective, the bristly white eyebrows knotted, the eyes peering soberly ahead.

In the main hall the others had arrived, all in their subdued Sunday morning clothes, their hats and gloves: Hester and Lee, Betts and Everett, and Madeline. Dr. Knowling suggested that they return later in the afternoon.

"Cornelia——?" came Senior's rising inflection, the signal for departure. He turned to Lucy then. "Lucy, I told Horace you're coming along with us. Fetch your gloves."

John took Cornelia's arm as the family started out of the house. It was at this point that he saw his father stop, peer rigidly ahead. The others also stopped. Walking toward the entry, were Teller Gowden and his wife.

"Hello, Uncle Teller," said John at once, and felt his mother's arm stiffen against him.

"Good morning, Teller," said Cornelia.

John saw Everett stir uncomfortably. He saw his father frown, the lips tighten, then the old man started forward, passed his brother without word or glance. Ivy Gowden, small and delicate beside the chunky Teller, sustained her pitifully gracious smile.

"How is Junior?" Teller faced his son, Everett.

"Dr. Knowling doesn't want him to have any more visitors this morning." Everett spoke hastily, harshly, to his father as they passed.

The family moved in silent file to the cars in the driveway. There were no chauffeurs. Senior was rarely seen in the nearby villages in a chauffeur-driven car except when going to New York. The sight of a chauffeur, he often said, gave the church grandiose hope for lavish donations.

Leonard Fole, seated in the rear of another Gowden sedan moving along the upstate highway, consulted his wrist watch: ten-twenty.

## SILVER SPOON

"Take it a bit faster, Walter," he said to the chauffeur.

This drive to the Elite Drive-In Theatre was not the pleasant change of pace Fole had anticipated last night, not with the word on Junior. This news about Horace Junior was a bloody awful business. What kind of hornet's nest would be opened now, he asked himself. Of one thing you could be sure. John Gowden would be pushed into the office. At least for the time. A bloody nuisance, that. A royal headache, all right. Be sticking his nose into everything. Like the Shinwell Block. Like other matters that were none of his business, that were in Fole's bailiwick and always had been.

His hand moved unwittingly to the raised welt high on his right cheek. He glanced distractedly out to the gray morning. He was anxious to be back at Glenway. "How far are we, Walter?"

"It's about five miles, sir," said the chauffeur.

"Righto." Then Fole remembered something.

"Walter—" he said in a conversational tone, "you've had occasion to drive Miss Anders and Mr. John a couple of times, haven't you?"

The cap bobbed.

"A personal question, Walter. It'll be kept in confidence." He cleared his throat. "Did you happen to hear what they were talking about?"

"Who?"

"Mr. John and that photographer."

"No, sir."

"You sure?"

"I don't listen, Mr. Fole." The man's shoulders bulked more resolutely.

"Walter, I expect co-operation. I told you that when I hired you." The man remained silent and Fole added, "You think Mr. Senior would have let me hire you if he'd been familiar with that situation of yours?"

There was a sharp movement of the man's shoulders. "I

## EDWIN GILBERT

Fole said, "I understand that, Walter. I believe you. I have no intention of showing anyone that report. We can forget it."

The chauffeur's bulky-wristed hands worked on the wheel. "Remember anything?" asked Fole quietly.

The man said, "I wasn't paying much attention, Mr. Fole. The only thing I remember was Mr. John saying he was sorry. I guess they had been having a fight. Miss Anders kept saying she didn't want to discuss it."

"Discuss what, Walter?"

"Something about Miss Anders not wanting anything from the Gowden Fund, something like that. I wasn't paying much attention, Mr. Fole."

"Righto," said Fole. "We can forget this now."

He leaned back, his hand on the armrest. The time passed more pleasantly now as he tried to organize a pattern, reconstruct the subject of the dispute between John and the photographer. But it didn't matter. For it was evident that John was walking into something all by himself. All you had to do was wait.

"It's right ahead there, sir." The chauffeur pointed to the tower sign of the Elite. "Mr. Fole—about what we were talking——"

"It's forgotten. I appreciate your confidence, Walter." Fole looked up, gave the man the instructions he'd been given last night, directing him through the deserted open area of the theatre to something called the Coffee Hut.

He stepped from the car, entered the low log-cabin structure. The restaurant was empty, but at the far right there was a door on which hung a sign: *MANAGER'S OFFICE WALDO GOLDSTONE*

Fole knocked once and walked in.

The manager, a tall stooped man with a pale harassed face, sat at a metal desk. "Mr. Fole?" the man stood up. "I see you found us all right."

Fole nodded. "Good of you to hold this, Mr. Goldstone."

"No trouble," said Goldstone. "Happens a lot, people are

## SILVER SPOON

always losing stuff around here." He opened a drawer and handed over Madeline's alligator-skin wallet. Fole made swift inventory of the contents. You had to watch these chaps.

"Cigarette?" Goldstone offered his pack.

"No thanks." Fole then said, "You say you found this wallet here on the grounds? I had the idea someone had picked it up on the highway."

"No, right here on the grounds." The manager lit his cigarette.

"You sure of that?" asked Fole.

The man exhaled a stream of smoke and frowned. "Certainly I'm sure, Mr. Fole. Why? Anything wrong?"

"No, no—nothing," replied Fole, "Do you know exactly where it was found?"

"Can't say that I know that," said the manager. "All I know is this fella—he's a steady patron here—he brought it to me after the second show last night."

"Happen to know his name?"

"No—he's on some bowling team. It was his friend who was with the woman. They were in here before the picture started. You couldn't miss them. Just one of those things." The manager glanced down to his cluttered desk.

"Yes. Yes, of course." Fole improvised rapidly, abruptly needing to minimize the incident. "Quite all right. Everything in order." He reached into his pocket, brought forth two dollars and folded the bills and placed them on the man's desk. "Very good of you, Goldstone. Ought to be worth a carton of cigarettes for your trouble."

"Thanks just the same." The man shook his head and handed back the money. "All in the day's work."

Fole looked at him with unconcealed surprise. "Righto. Anything you say."

Fole returned to the car and all the way back to Glenway he was silent. He closed his eyes, let his retentive memory work. Madeline.

## EDWIN GILBERT

nothing tangible, only bits and pieces of her past actions which could be interpreted any way you wanted. But in the light of this evidence of last night certain things could take on new meaning.

A number of incidents or episodes came back to him, remembrances of other occasions of Madeline's absences. He opened his eyes. The car was on the detour around Chaddford. He made a new decision. He gave up the almost irresistible idea of confronting Madeline with his knowledge or suspicion.

Instead he grasped at something else: save it. Bury it for the time being. Return the wallet to Madeline, say nothing, return it like a discreet chap: another considerate service of Leonard Fole's.

Hold back for now. Like all the Gowdens, Madeline held stock in the family corporation. Like the others she had a voice. Why couldn't it speak for him, if the time came?

If trouble came. With John. Now that Horace Junior was fading. If Johnny Boy started trouble. If that happened, it would be a bit of an ace card to have Madeline on his side.

With deep satisfaction he envisioned her face when she heard him impart his documented facts, saw that marble profile, the ash-blond hair swept back—quite a few gray strands might pop in overnight—yes, that would be quite an occasion.

Madeline would be on his side, you could be bloody sure. An asset. Like cash in the vault. Better. A new ally had been found.

The car moved swiftly down Jailhouse Road to the river's shore, turned left between the high gateposts of Glenway, and stopped. He saw the watchman step forth. Greeting the man, he turned up the wide palm of his hand in a gesture of expansive cordiality, nodded and leaned back again for the long uphill drive through the dense green of the forestland—the property of which, he, Leonard Fole, was more, quite a bit more, than custodian.

## 12

The city, rain-washed and clear by Monday morning, loomed cleanly in early sunlight. John Gowden moved along, westward on Fifty-seventh Street, toward Fifth Avenue. Presently he reached the corner where stood the granite bulk of Tiffany's.

He had just come from the downtown East Side where he'd been examining the Shinwell Block, and its skeletal shabbiness still clung to him as he entered the cool, lofty, hushed premises of Tiffany's. He sought out old Mr. Jaeger, who for over forty years had personally looked after the Gowden accounts.

Jaeger, a thin man whose pink scalp shone beneath thin silver hair, showed him an assortment of lipsticks. After some time he chose one which reasonably met the description which his sister Hester had given him. It was of woven gold, crowned at one end with a small sapphire of slatish cast. He charged the lipstick to Hester's account. It cost one hundred and ten dollars.

"How are your mother and father and the family?" asked Mr. Jaeger, as the gift was being wrapped.

John said they were well.

"Let me see—I think the last time you were in was when you got a wedding present for the Everett Gowdens—no—my how time slips by—it was for their second child—yes, a sterling cup, I remember."

"Yes," John said.

"And how is Mr. Junior?"

John hesitated. "Well, he's—he's taking a vacation. He's been working awfully hard and he's trying to rest up for a while."

When Mr. Jaeger gave him the small package, he said, "Always a great pleasure to see you, Mr. John."

## EDWIN GILBERT

John put the gift for Grace Anders in his pocket. He left the store and walked south on Fifth Avenue for several blocks to the Gowden Building. He moved with long slow strides, approaching the building with a feeling close to dread: duty and the surge of guilt over his brother's illness propelled him forward.

He saw looming before him the Gowden Building. That was not its official name—it had a number—but people always referred to it as the "Gowden Building." It was a white brick structure whose twenty-two stories tapered skyward in a series of tiers or set-backs.

Now as he entered the building's veined-marble foyer, he was greeted by the elevator starter. "Morning, Mr. Gowden," said the jockey-like man, brisk and military in putty-toned uniform.

"Hello, Harold." He moved to the bank of gilt-faced elevators.

"You been a stranger, sir."

John nodded, entered the first car, the elevator which exclusively serviced the Gowden company and their clients.

The offices of H.S. Gowden & Sons Realty Company, Inc., occupied nine floors of the building.

Within the Gowden elevator car—he hadn't been in it more than a dozen times since taking his leave of absence four years ago—John looked up at the small, lighted letters of the directory. It was, he thought, a deceptively simple testimony to more than one hundred and fifty years of burgeoning success: *H. S. Gowden & Sons Realty Co., Inc., 2nd floor, Real Estate Brokerage Division; 3rd, 4th, 5th floors, Management Division; 6th, 7th, 8th floors, Operation Division; 9th, 10th floors, Gowden Construction, Inc.*

He got off at the fifth floor.

"Why, good morning, Mr. John," said Mrs. Bowers, the elderly receptionist. "We never get to see much of you any more."



## SILVER SPOON

He smiled. "How have you been, Mrs. Bowers?"

"Just grand, thanks. It's grand to see you here again."

Mrs. Bowers touched a button on her desk, a door clicked open, and he entered the large open area devoted to property management, where over forty men and as many secretaries sat at gray-green metal desks in two long lines.

Moving along the aisle between the rows of desks, John realized, as he paused to exchange greetings with some of the men, that there was something markedly different in the way they spoke to him, in the intent cast of their eyes.

It had never happened before. And then it occurred to him: the news of Horace Junior's illness had sifted through, and what employees saw now was not just John Gowden putting in one of his rare appearances, but, rather, a man who might some day possibly become their chief, the successor to Horace Junior.

He moved on toward the Fifth Avenue end of the floor which contained the offices of his father, his brother, Philip Doncourt, the executive committee room and the oval chamber of the board of directors.

He opened the walnut-paneled door into the anteroom of Junior's office. "Oh, good morning, Mr. Gowden," said one of the young secretaries, and then Junior's personal assistant, Mr. Kellog, came forward. "How are you, Mr. John?"

"Hello, Mr. Kellog," he said. "I wanted to pick up those papers for Junior——"

"I have them right here, sir." From his desk Kellog took a large manila envelope and handed it to him. Then in a hushed voice as he walked John to the door: "How is Mr. Junior this morning?"

"Dr. Knowling said he was doing very satisfactorily."

"Good, good," murmured Kellog, stroking his bald skull. "Please tell him not to worry about a thing, won't you? We are all holding down the fort. And—Mr. John, if there is anything I can help you with——"

## EDWIN GILBERT

The deference and solicitude followed him as he started back to his own office.

He turned right, past Fole's office in the personnel department and Everett's office, moving to his own quarters, a commodious and simple, white-plastered office with a glass-topped desk and three business chairs. He opened one of the windows and raised the Venetian blinds.

During his leave of absence he had not maintained a secretary, so he telephoned Mrs. Waterman who was in charge of the stenographers' pool, and in a few minutes a young woman reported to his office.

"Good morning, Mr. Gowden," she said. "I am Lenore Gliddens."

He looked up, somewhat embarrassed to realize that this eager, lemon-haired girl was the same secretary who on other occasions had been sent to him. "Oh—hello, Miss Gliddens."

"I heard you might be coming in this morning, Mr. Gowden, and I asked Mrs. Waterman if she would—well—save me."

He nodded. "I'd like you to stay on here, Miss Gliddens, for however long this project takes——" He paused. "I'm going to set up a relocation bureau for the tenants in the Shinwell Block."

"Yes, Mr. Gowden."

# 13

Perhaps the most profound change produced by the illness of Horace Junior centered in Everett Teller Gowden. What had until now been only an ambitiousness, a zeal to measure up to Horace Senior, had now become a new and dynamic drive toward something else. An unexpected road had opened, one which he had never let himself contemplate before: to prove

## SILVER SPOON

himself the undisputed candidate to move into the office of Horace Junior.

So that on that afternoon as he worked with a renewed intensity, the appearance of his wife in the office at four o'clock came as an unwanted intrusion.

"Ev—" Bettina confronted him, slender and dark-haired in her hyacinth silk print. "I can see I'm as welcome here as small-pox. But honestly, Ev—it's been the deadliest day and I thought I might entice you out of here."

Everett put down the papers he'd been studying and took off his glasses. "Betts, I couldn't possibly get away. Why did you pick today?"

"I told you last night," said Bettina. She sat down on the black leather chair beside his desk. "I wanted to go to that private sale at Bergdorf's. I promised Lucinda. We had lunch at the club. But I'm stranded now, and what I thought, Ev, was, why don't I stay in town tonight?"

"Betts, I'm way behind here. I'm going to work tonight." He saw the delicate white oval of her face darken with disappointment. "I'm sorry, Betts."

She worked the white gloves in her hand. "Honestly, Ev, when I walked in here just now and saw you poring over your desk as if it were a matter of life and death, I thought if he had a great white moustache he'd look for all the world just like his uncle Horace!"

He laughed. He found her vision of him not unpleasant.

"But tonight, Ev——" Betts frowned as she faced him. "Nothing is that important, is it? Don't you think it would be fun just to be alone for once at the apartment? We simply never have any time alone any more. The weekends are becoming hopeless—we never——" She hesitated. "I thought it would be fun to have an evening together—we could scoot over to the Plaza now, have some tea or something, and——"

"Betts, don't lure me. It's impossible today."

She looked at him. "What is it, Ev? Are you afraid?" Bettina

## EDWIN GILBERT

said sardonically, "we won't be able to meet next month's bills?"

"Betts, I'm in no mood for humor. You don't seem to realize that Horace Junior is very sick. The work is going to pile up."

"Oh——" he heard her say.

"What?"

"Nothing." Betts was staring at him. Her brow was furrowed. Then with suddenness she said, "I know how you feel about Teller." She halted. "But this—it's almost gruesome, it's fantastic. Horace Junior has only been out of the office one day. How can you, how can you, Everett!"

"Betts, must we have a scene? I happen to be up to my neck here. I'm trying to push through this elevator conversion program."

She rose, walked away from his desk. When she turned back to him she said, "What about a little conversion of your wife? I have the feeling I'm turning into a vegetable. I think we ought to talk, Ev, before this——"

"What do you mean?" broke in Everett. He shifted uncomfortably in the black leather swivel chair: something impelled him to continue the battle no matter how personal it might become. It was better than having to hear her accuse him of opportunism inspired by Junior's heart attack. He couldn't explain this to her, to anyone, for on the surface it did look gruesome, possibly ruthless. But it wasn't. He didn't feel that way about it, not that crassly; to him it was simply a natural thing, a reasonable process. . . .

"You know what I mean," said Betts. "I mean, the way things have been going I might as well be married to Phil Doncourt for all the good my own dear husband is. That's what I mean."

## SILVER SPOON

With an effort at spontaneity he went to her, bent down and kissed her.

From the intercom his secretary's voice intruded: "Mr. Doncourt is here, Mr. Gowden."

He felt Betts' mouth and arms go slack. He separated from her and with his breast-pocket handkerchief rubbed off the lipstick. "All right," he said to the secretary. He turned to Betts. "Why don't you go to the apartment, Betts? I'll call you there around five-thirty."

"Mrs. Everett Gowden is here to see you, Mr. Gowden," announced John's secretary.

"Oh?" He looked up from his desk, surprised. "Yes, have her come in please, Miss Gliddens."

John looked at his watch, then rose and put on the coat of his gray suit. He was pleased and not a little astonished at the amount of work he had accomplished today: the relocation bureau for the Shinwell tenants was, at least organized.

"Hi, John."

Bettina came in and almost at once he recognized the subtle engraving of disturbance on her face, despite its façade of sociability. He stood up. "Hello, Betts——"

"I'm being the official office pest this afternoon, would you put up with me for a minute?" She stood before his desk, her short dark bangs showing beneath the straw bonnet, the blue eyes staring at him with something close to bravado. "Honestly, I won't stay more than a minute. You look extremely business-like and busy—do you know I think this is only the second time I've ever seen you in the office?"

## EDWIN GILBERT

said sardonically, "we won't be able to meet next month's bills?"

"Betts, I'm in no mood for humor. You don't seem to realize that Horace Junior is very sick. The work is going to pile up."

"Oh——" he heard her say.

"What?"

"Nothing." Betts was staring at him. Her brow was furrowed. Then with suddenness she said, "I know how you feel about Teller." She halted. "But this—it's almost gruesome, it's fantastic. Horace Junior has only been out of the office one day. How can you, how can you, Everett!"

"Betts, must we have a scene? I happen to be up to my neck here. I'm trying to push through this elevator conversion program."

She rose, walked away from his desk. When she turned back to him she said, "What about a little conversion of your wife? I have the feeling I'm turning into a vegetable. I think we ought to talk, Ev, before this——"

"What do you mean?" broke in Everett. He shifted uncomfortably in the black leather swivel chair: something impelled him to continue the battle no matter how personal it might become. It was better than having to hear her accuse him of opportunism inspired by Junior's heart attack. He couldn't explain this to her, to anyone, for on the surface it did look gruesome, possibly ruthless. But it wasn't. He didn't feel that way about it, not that crassly; to him it was simply a natural thing, a reasonable process. . . .

"You know what I mean," said Betts. "I mean, the way things have been going I might as well be married to Phil Doncourt for all the good my own dear husband is. That's what I mean."

"Betts—you know it isn't intentional or anything like that. It's simply that this is one of those periods—— Why don't you go out to Long Island, stay at your mother's tonight, and then tomorrow I'll——"

"I don't wish to see my mother."

## SILVER SPOON

With an effort at spontaneity he went to her, bent down and kissed her.

From the intercom his secretary's voice intruded: "Mr. Doncourt is here, Mr. Gowden."

He felt Betts' mouth and arms go slack. He separated from her and with his breast-pocket handkerchief rubbed off the lipstick. "All right," he said to the secretary. He turned to Betts. "Why don't you go to the apartment, Betts? I'll call you there around five-thirty."

"Mrs. Everett Gowden is here to see you, Mr. Gowden," announced John's secretary.

"Oh?" He looked up from his desk, surprised. "Yes, have her come in please, Miss Gliddens."

John looked at his watch, then rose and put on the coat of his gray suit. He was pleased and not a little astonished at the amount of work he had accomplished today: the relocation bureau for the Shinwell tenants was, at least organized.

"Hi, John."

Bettina came in and almost at once he recognized the subtle engraving of disturbance on her face, despite its façade of sociability. He stood up. "Hello, Betts——"

"I'm being the official office pest this afternoon, would you put up with me for a minute?" She stood before his desk, her short dark bangs showing beneath the straw bonnet, the blue eyes staring at him with something close to bravado. "Honestly, I won't stay more than a minute. You look extremely business-like and busy—do you know I think this is only the second time I've ever seen you in the office?"

"Sit down, Betts." He offered her the chair closest to his desk.

"You are terribly involved, aren't you?" She sat down and placed her blue bag and the white gloves on her lap.

"Well—the Shinwell Block——"

"Oh, that's right," Betts said. "Well, at least that's one project I've hasn't taken on." She moved her chair

## EDWIN GILBERT

self to a day in town. I lunched with Lucinda Bayles, by the way."

"You did?"

"Yes." Betts smiled, she seemed somewhat more relaxed now. "Were you ears burning? We gave you a going-over."

There was a moment's stillness, and then Betts said, "John—would you do a tremendous favor for your long-lost love? I'm stranded. Ev's hopelessly tied up as usual and I'd like someone to take me to tea or something somewhere—are you free?"

"Well"—John tugged at his ear—"I had planned to——" He stopped. "That is, I thought I might phone Miss Anders. But I'm not sure if she—well, we'll work out something."

"Oh, I would so appreciate that—if I'm not in the way," said Betts.

She did look stranded, he thought. "I'll call her," he said.

"Oh, you are my very own genu-wine favor-ite!" exclaimed Betts, and spontaneously leaned over and kissed him very firmly. "You are, you know."

John cleared his throat, and glanced down at his watch again. He reached for the telephone directory. He had been undecided about calling, but Bettina's appearance, he told himself, gave him a reason to call. As he dialed the number, Betts suddenly arose, crossed the office and stood by the open window. While he waited for the connection he found himself watching her. He studied her face, now in profile, and he thought with admiration that she carried her new somberness well.

# 14

From beyond the open windows of her apartment came the city's frenetic song, the end-of-day sounds that are always the most strident, so that Grace, who was washing out her stock-



## SILVER SPOON

ings in the bathroom, did not at first hear the ringing of the telephone.

Now, as the steady ring filtered through to her, she quickly turned off the water and went into the high-ceilinged studio living room, to the phone near the bank of windows.

"Hello?"

"Miss Anders—Grace?"

She recognized the low, hesitant voice of John Gowden.

"Yes?" she said.

"Grace—I—are you planning to drive back to Glenway tonight?"

"Yes. Why?" She turned, and gazed absently out of the window.

"Well—it's—I wondered," John said, "if you might be free? That is, we—Betts and I, thought you might have a drink with us?"

Bettina, she thought. She said, "Yes, I am free for a while."

He said they would meet her in the Palm Court at the Plaza, and she wondered as she began to dress if he'd asked Bettina Gowden along for the same reason that Lee Mailenson had asked Philip Doncourt along when she lunched with him at the Colony. . . . The subterfuges, all these curious and devious little ways of Glenway, she thought, putting on her black shantung suit, this chronic mistrust of themselves and the outside world——

She arrived in front of the Plaza at six o'clock. They were seated in a far rear corner in the Palm Court, John Gowden and Bettina (as if they were hiding), and when she reached them, John stood up and spoke too rapidly, too haltingly.

When the waiter appeared he and Bettina ordered iced tea, and she asked for a very dry martini.

"Oh—I think I'll have a martini just this once," Bettina said as if she had just volunteered to take off her clothes. "Why don't you too, John? Come on."

"All right," he said, and gave the waiter the revised order.

## EDWIN GILBERT

Grace could not define it, but there was something different about John Gowden today, a vague, preoccupied or agitated air that puzzled her.

"I'm awfully glad you could come, Miss Anders," Bettina said, said, after the drinks had been placed on the small round table. "Of course you can do this any time you want, but for me——" A faint sigh, and she turned to John. "I've been thinking lately—why didn't I take up something at school instead of nothing! I'd like to *do* something—oh, I don't mean anything necessarily as complicated as Miss Anders does, but—you know, open a shop or go into some kind of work. Oh, there's all that hospital volunteer work, but that's not the same thing. What do you think, Long John? What do you think I might do?"

A slight weariness came over his face as though he had heard this often. "I don't know, Betts. But I think you're wrong. I think the hospital work is interesting and important."

"Lucinda's giving it up. Which I think is smart of her." To Grace then: "You remember Lucinda Bayles whom you met at our party. Cindy is going to work for the restoration this summer."

"Oh?" Grace said. She looked over at John.

"Yes," he said.

How easily this was accepted, she thought. If you were one of the proper links in the proper chain there were no suspicions about your wanting anything; Lucinda Bayles could walk in and ask for it and the family accepted it. Lucinda, she thought. She took a long sip of the martini.

"Heavens, it must be past six," Bettina said. "Excuse me. I've got to phone my industrious husband. I'll ask him to join us, John, but you can be sure he won't."

When she had gone, John said, "I picked up something for you this morning——" From his pocket he brought forth a small, wrapped box and handed it to her.

"What is it?" she asked in surprise.

## SILVER SPOON

"A lipstick. Hester asked me to get it for you."

"Why?" Grace opened the package.

"Well—she wanted you to have it."

She stared incredulously at the textured gold tube which was crowned by a small star sapphire.

"I'm overwhelmed," was all she could say at first. She shook her head. "But why wouldn't she have given it to me herself?"

He hesitated. "Hester is—well, she feels odd about—about giving anything." He evidently did not care to explain further, for he said, "I thought, Grace, that if you'd like—that is, I'm driving back to Glenway tonight and I thought we could go up together. I want to talk to you." He stopped, disconcerted, and stood up as Bettina Gowden returned to the table.

"He'll be right along," announced Bettina, and lifted her glass. "I'd better finish this in a hurry, hadn't I?" She drank her cocktail. "Would you believe it, John? When I said I was here with you, Ev changed his mind and said he'd be right over! Are you flattered?" She paused. "Would you ask the waiter to get two iced teas?" Turning now to Grace, she said, "I'm trying to convince him that I ought to stay in town tonight." There was that same light sigh again. "I must say getting away from the country and the children would be a welcome change——"

Grace nodded. It was ironic, she thought, that Bettina Gowden, so unmistakably a handsome and intelligent girl, should have to beg for companionship.

With the arrival of Everett Gowden, bustling and earnest in his rumpled seersucker suit, the cocktail hour turned into the Gowden hour. There was a prolonged business colloquy between the two men, and as Grace spoke with Bettina, the male talk continued in steady, urgent counterpoint.

She glanced over at John once. Yes, he did seem different, as she had first thought. Only now it was more pronounced. He seemed almost as intent, as hounded or harassed as his cousin. It was her first insight into what could be called his corporation personality. And she could not help but detect the subtle,

## EDWIN GILBERT

but flinty kind of skirmishing between him and Everett—these two young men with their overwhelming fortunes and future fortunes, who were now so fiercely competing, so fierce and well-mannered.

Suddenly Everett Gowden turned to her. "I haven't meant to be rude, Miss Anders—but there is quite a bit to catch up on—you'll forgive me, won't you?"

"Yes, of course."

"All right, Ev," Bettina said, "now that I've captured you, am I going to stay overnight or not? I have fascinating plans."

"I'll have to get back to the office. But we can have dinner, Betts."

"Gentlemen, enough," broke in Bettina then. "How about it, Everett, do I stay in town tonight?"

Hastily John turned to Grace. "I—I thought if we started for Glenway now—we might have dinner some place in the country."

The Everett Gowdens remained to dine at the Plaza, and John accompanied Grace out of the hotel. Without consulting her, he had the doorman signal for a taxi, and they drove downtown to pick up her suitcase of fresh clothes and equipment.

Her apartment house on East Forty-fourth Street was a modernized brownstone. It was an experience for John, being in her apartment.

As she finished her packing in the bedroom, he found himself studying the room, trying to obtain from this environment more clues about her character or personality. He walked over to the high wall of bookshelves.

"I'm ready," he heard her say, and he turned to see her coming from the bedroom carrying a small leather suitcase. "Shall we start?"

"Yes." He couldn't help feeling disappointment, for he would have liked to stay on. The truth was that he had never had the experience of visiting this kind of apartment. He'd been at the

## SILVER SPOON

apartments of some of his classmates and other family friends, but they were all married, their environments, their way of living were altogether different from this.

How often while walking from the office along Fifth Avenue to the family town house, he had passed these girls, young women of accomplishment like Grace, going home from their jobs, alone, but looking marvelously cheerful and pretty, and he would wonder about their lives, what kind of men they knew, and he would think how interesting it would be to know one of these girls, be invited to her apartment.

But if you told anyone that you couldn't (or wouldn't) very well go out of your way to meet women like this, they would never quite understand it, or, as most often happened, they would look at you in that funny way, as if to say: he's scared to death, so damn rich he's scared she might want some of it. . . .

But there were more facets to the problem, many more, and you could never explain them without feeling absurd or ashamed. It was, in the final analysis, why you took the line of least resistance with girls of, as Cornelia would say, "compatible rank." For example, Lucinda Bayles had made on him a more favorable impression than was perhaps warranted. You didn't have to explain or justify anything with a girl like Lucinda. . . .

"I've been admiring your apartment," he said, "I—I've never been in one quite like it and——"

"You may have it," Grace said cryptically. She opened the hall door.

He saw her stop abruptly, and then he heard the footsteps on the hall stairs, and presently he saw a man standing before the open door.

"Gracie the little pacemaker in all her corporeal beauty!" said the man, a robust figure with thickly matted red hair. "Edgar said I might still catch you here and——" His blue-green eyes suddenly found John.

## EDWIN GILBERT

"I am just leaving, Scott," Grace said. And then in a tight, almost impolite manner: "This is Mr. Gowden—Mr. Ramsey."

They shook hands.

"What I came about, Gracie," Scott Ramsey was saying, "was to see if I couldn't swipe some extra bed linen and towels. My place is shy, and if there is one thing I hate to spend money on its linens and towels." He turned to John. "Don't let me detain you, Mr. Gowden."

"We were just leaving, Scott," Grace said. "I have to be at Glenway. Please help yourself—within reason."

"Must you rush off, Gracie? We could certainly have one small drink, couldn't we? Or has my liquor cabinet been cleaned and dusted out in the cause of good housewifery?" Then: "Mr. Gowden I am honored to have met you, an honor indeed."

John felt the warmth rising in his throat. With effort he turned to Grace. "Grace, I—that is if you——"

"Look"—she touched her hair—"if you'd like to go on, I'll drive up myself and——"

"No, no," interjected Scott Ramsey, "I wouldn't hear of it." He removed his rough tweed coat exposing a faded blue denim work shirt and a rust-colored wool tie. "Don't let me stand in the way. I know you're in the midst of a very praiseworthy sociological study at Glenway, Gracie. I'll just filch my bed linen and be off." He extended his hand to John. "Honored, sir." And he strode into the bedroom.

Despite the man's random air John knew that Scott Ramsey had been as conscious of him as if he'd been addressing him alone. He stepped to the doorway, almost propelled there by the obsession of a single unshakable thought: to get away, to get beyond Scott Ramsey.

"I'm sorry," he heard Grace murmur.

"I think I'd better—that is, I'm sure I'll be in the way, Grace," he said.

"What?" She was staring at him. "Oh. Oh yes. Of course." And then she was no longer looking at him. "Good night."

## SILVER SPOON

He deplored what he'd done; he regarded his action with a disgust as vivid as that which he had recognized in her eyes, even though he knew he could not have acted otherwise. He walked disconsolately to the corner and hailed a taxicab. It wasn't until the driver asked him, that he realized he had no immediate destination. Then he said, "Plaza Hotel, please."

When he reached the hotel, Everett and Bettina were just finishing dinner in the main dining room. He joined them, though he had no appetite. He ordered a pot of coffee.

He saw at once from their stiffness and the aura of hostility that hovered palpably between them, that Ev and Betts must have been in the midst of the bitterest recriminations.

Betts was the first to admit it. She turned to John. "Well," she said, "I've lost. I'm going back to Glenway. What happened to Miss Anders?"

"She's—she's driving up later."

"Then you can take me, can't you?"

Everett said, "You've got your car, Betts."

Later, when Everett left to return to the office, and John and Betts started walking northward on Fifth Avenue in the light of early dusk, she informed him that she had no intention of driving back alone and that if he wouldn't mind she'd go back to Glenway with him. "Sometimes," said Betts, "I'll bet you're awfully glad you aren't married—when you have to listen to certain people who shall be nameless."

"You have the children, Betts. That's more than I can say."

"You know, you sound almost as awful as I feel."

He said, "Would you mind if I stop off at the house for a minute? I thought of a few books I could take up for Junior."

"Anything you say." Her voice was constrained, even harsh.

The Gowden town house was one of the last city residences designed by Stanford White. A six-story building, faced with limestone, its entry was flanked by two stone Ionic columns.

John reached into his pocket for the keys, preparatory to the three-stage process of gaining admittance to the building. The

## EDWIN GILBERT

street door of glass and wrought-iron grillwork was never locked, giving into the stone-floored foyer, but with the opening of this door a buzzer sounded in the butler's pantry. He unlocked the second door, also of glass and wrought iron, and entered the inner foyer. Here he unlocked the handsome, oak-paneled door which brought you into the house itself, the black-and-white marble floor of the entrance hall with its chandelier, white balustraded staircase, automatic elevator.

To the left were the black double doors of the "Waiting Room" and the powder room. The remainder of the street floor was occupied by the housekeeper, butler, cook, maids, laundress and chauffeur. (They were all now at Glenway except the housekeeper, Gerta, and her husband, Albert, the butler.)

"Good evening, Mr. John." Albert, in white coat and black trousers hurried forward along the hall. He switched on the chandelier lights.

"Hello, Albert. How are you? How is Gerta?" John said. He placed his briefcase on the mahogany console table.

"We are good, very good, thank you," said Albert. He nodded to Bettina. "Mrs. Gowden."

"Hello, Albert," Betts said.

"There will be dinner, Mr. John, if——"

"No thank you. We only stopped in for a moment." He turned to Betts. "I'll be right back." He ran the elevator to the fourth floor and went into the study adjacent to his bedroom.

Betts was not in the hall when he returned to the street floor. He placed the books beside his briefcase. And then he heard the sounds from behind the double doors of the Waiting Room.

When he entered he saw her at the far end of the room, and she swung round, startled. She smiled and he saw the wetness in her eyes.

"Betts—what is it?"

"Nothing." She dabbed her eyes with a small handkerchief. "I just had the weeps. Isn't that ridiculous? Shall we go?"

But when they returned to the double doors, she stopped, and he heard a faint sob escape her, and then——



## SILVER SPOON

vulsive motion she lurched against him. "Oh, John—John——!"

Awkwardly he held her, awkwardly stroking the back of her neck from time to time. "What is it, Betts?"

She did not reply, holding on to him, her head down.

"I'll have Gerta make some coffee," he said.

"No—no, I'm sorry. I don't know what the trouble with me is, it can't be as bad as I make it—only——" she floundered. "Oh, what's the point of fooling myself—or you! You know as well as I do."

"Betts——"

"It must be my fault," she declared. "I'm the one who's failed somewhere. I've never succeeded in anything really."

"It's temporary, Betts. I'm sure it will work out."

"Oh, will it?" She slumped down on the striped settee. "Will it? What chance does it have? It's just going straight to hell and I know it and if I had any guts I'd leave. I've seen it coming, but I've closed my eyes. Everett is a stranger, a stranger to me. It's worse than——" She shut her eyes against welling tears. "I'm sorry, John." Then she said, "I've never succeeded at anything." Her voice came dryly, bitterly now. "I haven't. All I've added up to is zero, nothing. After all of it, after living twenty-seven years, being raised for only one purpose, one stupid purpose: marriage—I've even failed in that! It's the failure, the pointlessness of my whole existence that I can't bear!"

He went to the settee, sat down beside her, but he couldn't find anything to say or, perhaps instinctively, he was afraid to speak. He put his arm around her trying somehow to give her some kind of reassuring kinship.

It was a mistake, for Betts turned and buried her face against his throat and held to him. He knew even as she touched him that now he was being forced to recognize the situation he had long wanted to avert. And now that the relationship between them had clearly altered, he found himself unable to continue even the small consolation or advice or confidence that their

## EDWIN GILBERT

He could not admit the new closeness he felt for her, nor could he summon the courage to reject her. At best he knew anything he might say would be a commitment of one kind or another and that it could expose them to an involvement that could be ruinous.

What he did was more out of caution than honor: he took her back to her apartment at Sixty-fourth Street and Park Avenue to await Everett. And then he drove out of the city, reaching the threshold of Glenway at midnight.

# 15

The month of August set in motion a succession of happenings which kept John Gowden pressed for time and intensely active; it helped somewhat to bridge the desolate period that Grace Anders' absence left. He was thankful for the crowded schedule of the days ahead: preparations for the annual company outing which, at his instigation, was to be held for the first time at Glenway, consumed all the hours he could spare away from the restoration.

The annual outing for the employees of Gowden Realty got underway at ten o'clock Saturday morning the twenty-sixth, as people began to arrive by car and chartered buses. By noon there were over four hundred employees with their wives or husbands gathered at the improvised picnic grounds along the river in the southeastern section of Glenway. The catering was handled efficiently, everything having been brought up from New York. And after the picnic there was softball, swimming and tennis—Teller turned over his courts for the day. Avery Trimble, who was well liked by everyone in the company, was on hand, and Madeline was very helpful as a kind of roving hostess; she looked very serene and handsome. Everett, who had opposed the plan to hold the affair at Glenway, neverthe-

## SILVER SPOON

less put in a full day and worked conscientiously to organize and conduct the company tennis tournament. Betts volunteered to take charge of the recreation for the children of the employees. There were a number of times when John could have been with her, but because the situation between her and Everett had deteriorated so noticeably, he was careful to stay out of her way.

Cornelia, of course, was indefatigable; she worked from early morning until the last car had gone, and scarcely showed a sign of fatigue. But Senior put in only one brief appearance. He had a pathological fear, John knew, of exposing himself to any possible importunate encounters with employees on social occasions. Senior arrived at the picnic area just after lunch and made a speech to the large assemblage. "I am delighted," he said, reluctantly using the microphone, "that so many of you could be here today. Enjoy yourselves. The company office hours will resume Monday at nine o'clock."

Later in the afternoon, as John stood by the tennis courts talking with Spencer Goelen and Carl Leggett, two of the vice presidents of the firm, Philip Doncourt came over and said that the outing had developed into a most successful event; he said that the press coverage would be favorable, that the occasion was one of the most profitable ventures in public relations the company had ever undertaken.

As October neared, the autumn flowering of Glenway reached its crescendo of color. From John Gowden's sitting-room window, he looked out to the tiers of treetops sloping riverward, their leaves blazing scarlet and vermilion and amber.

He lingered there by his window on the second floor that Tuesday morning, until it was past time to see his father at breakfast. Reluctantly he went downstairs.

"Splendid morning," said Senior from his position at the head of the long, polished mahogany dining table. He leaned back in the high Chippendale chair and peered at John, that even-

## EDWIN GILBERT

ment and hope. "I'm going to walk over to Junior's. Have to talk with him before he leaves for New York. You can join me, John."

If his father had said: Can you join me? John would have said yes at once. As it was, however, he heard himself answer: "I have an appointment in the village."

The frosty eyes narrowed, "Your brother," said Senior pertinently, "has several appointments too. In the office."

"Yes." John backtracked to stem the onrush of guilt. Cora, the maid, appeared with his eggs and bacon.

"Good." His father reached over, firmly patted his sleeve. "Always enjoy a walk with you, son." His smile warmed. "We feel the same about Glenway. At least we have that in common, haven't we?"

John nodded and turned to his breakfast, aware once again of how deeply his father yearned for closer communication with him. Now with Junior's existence threatened, he had again turned to John: his attempts to groom him, inculcate him with his brother's qualities, had become an over-persistent, unrelenting obsession.

"John, there's something I want to ask you. Have you spoken with Bettina?"

"No."

"What do you make of it? I'm not asking you to betray a confidence," said his father, "but this is a family matter, John. We have to know. You realize this is the second weekend Betts has gone to Long Island to stay at Hawthorne. I have not wanted to question Everett. He's doing a splendid job, lots of ginger there. But we know something is wrong."

"Whatever it is," John said, resolving to remain tactful and uninvolved, "I'm sure they'll work it out. I don't think any of us ought to interfere."

"Someone may have to," said his father. "We can attribute much of this situation to Teller." He wrinkled his nose with distaste. "Teller has never done anything to guide or help them."

He rose. "I'll be waiting outside for you, son. Would you go up to your mother's room and fetch Winston?"

John finished eating, left the dining room and went upstairs to his mother's suite. Cornelia, in bed jacket of quilted pink silk, sitting up in the four-poster, was writing out the menus for the week ahead. He kissed her, and after a brief chat, turned and patted Winston and then led the dog downstairs.

Senior was standing impatiently, hands clasped behind him, in the center of the driveway. Winston ran to him, and the old man stooped down, stroked his head and said, "Good morning, Winston."

"Let's take the short cut, Father," said John. "I want to see George."

His father nodded. At seventy-three he moved with vigorous gait, stepping briskly along.

A quarter-mile from the main house, John led the way across a field to one of the old orchards. George, the chief gardener and custodian of the grounds, was supervising the sawing into firewood of two ancient apple trees. "Morning, sir. Morning, Mr. John." George Russell was a hawk-faced, deceptively slight-looking man whose sinews were tough as ironwood. His pride in the grounds of Glenway was a staunchly proprietary one.

John said, "George, I wanted to ask when you could get around to the Miles Oak. I was looking at it yesterday again and—I don't know—but those cables and wires looked pretty slack. I think you ought to get the tree people over and have them take a look at it. I think it ought to be rebraced—protected."

"Nonsense," said his father, "that tree scarcely bent in the last blow."

"I'll take a look at it, sir," said George calmly.

"Don't waste a nickel on it, George," said Senior. "Tree surgeons are like all surgeons. They always recommend an operation."

## EDWIN GILBERT

Returning to the short-cut trail through the adjacent forest-land, Senior said, "When Miles Gowden carved his initials in that tree it was ninety years old. That was in 1779. It has survived ice storms and droughts and hurricanes. There is such a thing as coddling a tree too much. Trees and people have a way of looking after themselves if they aren't over-coddled."

When they reached the Georgian colonial residence of Horace Junior, the maid showed them into the dining room where Lucy and Junior were finishing breakfast.

"Oh good morning, Father," said Horace Junior. "Hello, John."

Lucy buzzed for the maid and, when she appeared, asked her to bring in a glass of buttermilk and more coffee.

"How are you, Horace?" John asked his brother, and sat down.

"You look splendid, son," Senior spoke cheerfully as he appraised Junior.

"I couldn't feel more fit," said Junior, though now he glanced with affectionate concern at his father. "Father, don't you think these walks over here are a little strenuous? I think you ought to use the car. Or at least have Walter drive you back."

Senior chuckled. "The minute I begin to coddle myself, I'll be done for." He lifted his chained watch from his breast pocket and noted the time. "Several items, Horace, before you leave. First: The Pilmer Building. You might take it up at the executive session today, feel out the others. But say nothing about what my feelings are on the matter. I'd like to hear outside opinions."

Junior nodded, brought out his pocket notebook and faithfully jotted down his notes. John and Lucy sat drinking coffee while his father and brother finished the business at hand.

"Mr. Gowden," the maid addressed Horace Junior from the dining-room doorway, "the car is ready."

"Thank you." Junior rose from the table; he kissed Lucy. When he faced John he said. "I'm certainly pleased by the way

## SILVER SPOON

the restoration is coming along. Are you going to be ready to open by next May?"

"I think we'll be ready before that," John said.

"I'll have your office repainted for you—for a long-term occupancy beginning May first," joked Horace Junior. But then, after Lucy and Senior had left the room, his face sobered. He put his arm around John's shoulder. "I've been wanting to say this for some time, John. If anything happens to me—I mean if you should succeed me, as I hope you will—there's one unpleasant task ahead that I haven't had the courage to do—that is, I haven't wanted to get Father disturbed about it. But, John, someone is going to have to do it."

John said at once, "You mean Fole?"

Junior nodded. "I've always tried to protect Fole for Father's sake. But the fact is I can trace much of my own condition to the years of aggravation I've had because of Leonard Fole. There's no point going into all of it now——" Junior's breath was labored. "When the time comes, John, if you're in the proper position, you are the one who will have to do it. I can't. I can no longer battle—call it cowardice or selfishness, but when I go, I"—he looked away—"I want to know I've never broken any faith with Father. I want him to remember me in that way——"

Awkwardly John said, "Please don't worry about that, Horace."

"I do though. I am concerned for one simple reason." Junior faced him intently. "I've had the uneasy fear that when the time comes you—you might not accept the responsibility—if it is offered."

John swallowed again. "You know how I feel about Fole, how I've always felt. Look, Horace—I've got Hamilton Livesy pretty much up on everything at the restoration I can——"

"I know what you're about to say," interrupted Horace. "No, I wouldn't hear of it. I don't want you to walk out on the restoration now. I know what it means to you. I was speaking

## EDWIN GILBERT

"Horace, dear!" Lucy called from the hallway.

"Coming, Lucy."

John accompanied his brother to the car in the driveway. The chauffeur opened the door. Horace kissed Lucy again and said goodbye to his father. The black Buick sedan nosed slowly along the ascent to the main Glenway road.

John was late, but he walked with his father to the farm grounds though he did not wait to inspect the preparations for the steeplechase. He borrowed the farm manager's jeep and drove back to Chaddford.

The spectacle of the restoration was marred for him: it stretched before him now, the colonial village with its ancient houses and taverns and shops, the church rising at the north end of the green, but it did not represent accomplishment or satisfaction; it stood before him as a costly reminder of his long evasion.

He thought: each day spent here is a stolen one. Yet he knew he had to continue. He was the prime moving force and he needed to stay right with it until it was completed and open to the public. A reality. After that he would have no more choice. After that he would leave Glenway for the responsibility that had to be taken on in New York.

There was only one redeeming aspect to the future: to abolish Fole. When, however, he attempted to visualize or plan the course of action, he grew instinctively apprehensive. He knew it would not be simple. He knew nothing connected with Leonard Fole would ever be simple.

# 16

When Grace Anders next saw Glenway it was midmorning on the Saturday of October seventh. This time she was not alone; she was driving up with Edgar Devlin, the senior editor from

90



## SILVER SPOON

*Enterprise*. And though she knew this would be an inconvenient day for the Gowdens, this being the day of the Glenway steeplechase, there was no alternative: Edgar had to present the dummy issue of *Enterprise* to the family and to obtain their signatures for the necessary legal releases required before publication of the photographs.

The annual steeplechase represented the only major social-sports event at Glenway. That it was an event was now undisputed, though in the beginning, in 1937, when Lee Mailenson had initiated the first race, the Gowdens, who indulged in few of the frivolities common to other families of parallel wealth, had opposed the idea. Lee, however, had pushed it through, had won from Horace Senior permission to convert the needed area of ground to a steeplechase field. Now, almost twenty years later the event had become an accepted part of the otherwise modest recreational life of Glenway.

Without exception all the Gowdens attended, and if they were away from Glenway, they usually made it their business to get back. That is why the absence of Bettina Marsh Gowden, who was scheduled to ride in the Women's race, took on particular interest and speculation, within the immediate circle of the family, alarm.

It was half-past one in the afternoon, about an hour before the steeplechase, that the first word concerning Bettina reached Glenway. It came as the Senior Gowdens, after an early lunch, were seated in their wicker chairs on the east terrace of the main house with Edgar Devlin, Grace Anders, John Gowden and Philip Doncourt. The release papers had just been signed, and John had been astonished and relieved to see that his father had signed readily; Senior was, in fact, pleased with the portfolio of photographs, and told Grace so. The old man was in exceptionally genial spirits when Isabel appeared at the French doors to the terrace.

"Mr. Gowden——" The maid addressed Senior; her features were agitated. "Mr. Teller is here to see you."

EDWIN GILBERT

a look with Cornelia, then rose. "You'd better come along, John. You too, Doncourt."

Doncourt nodded and then asked Grace and Devlin to excuse the family.

"I'll be back as soon as I can," John said to Grace, and turned to accompany his mother and father into the house.

It was only the second time his uncle Teller had ever come to the house; his last visit had been twelve years ago when Junior's son had died.

"John," said Teller formally, "you can tell your father I don't care for this any more than he does." He paused. "Hello, Cornelia."

"Hello, Teller."

"What is it?" Senior demanded at once, but confining his gaze to the newel post.

"John," said Teller, "will you do me the courtesy of showing us into your father's study? I've sent word for Everett to come here. He is out sailing with some of Lee's guests."

Inside the burgundy-hued leather room, Senior took his place at the mahogany, lion-footed table. John held a leather wing chair for his mother. He and Doncourt remained standing.

"John," said Senior, "would you ask your uncle to come to the point." He lifted the chained watch from his breast pocket, glanced irritably at the time. "The steeplechase begins at two-thirty."

John turned to his uncle. "What is it, Uncle Teller?"

Teller stood there, beside Doncourt. His countenance held no joviality and the merry eyes were grave. "I came here," he addressed John and Cornelia, his back to Senior, "because my son seems to put great store by what my brother thinks of him"—the old bitterness flared as he spoke—"and I'm afraid this is one time when my good brother can share some of the responsibility. Bettina just telephoned me from Hawthorne," said Teller. "She's not coming back. She's flying to the Virgin Islands, for a divorce."

In the ensuing stillness, Teller lit his cigarette. John shifted

## SILVER SPOON

on his feet, then sat down, aware of a sudden chilling in the core of his stomach.

"Betts and Everett——" Cornelia said with dismay, almost to herself. "You say you just spoke to Bettina?"

"Yes," said Teller. "I've tried not to interfere with the boy's life—Ivy and I have tried to let him and Betts go their own way, but if we can save——" He stopped and shook his head, his composure shaken.

"Doncourt," said Senior then, "you'd better look after Miss Anders and Mr. Devlin. I don't want them to leave." As Doncourt started for the door, Senior said, "Say nothing about this." Doncourt nodded and left the room. "Does Everett know, John?"

John then turned to Teller, and his uncle said, "No."

"Where are the children?" asked Cornelia.

"With Bettina. They're going to stay with Mrs. Marsh at Hawthorne," answered Teller.

"Oh dear." Cornelia rose. She walked to the west window. "How long do you suppose it will be before Everett gets back, John?"

Startled out of his own reflections, John turned to his mother. "What, Mother?" But even before he could summon his poise, he detected in her eyes a flickering new concern as she peered at him.

Confronting the group—seeing his father in the same room with his uncle Horace, seeing Cornelia there, and John, Everett was immediately apprehensive. He did not know the specific reason for the meeting, but the presence of his father told him that the matter was personal rather than business: personal could only mean Bettina.

"Sit down, Everett," said Senior at once. "I don't want you to feel that we are prying into your personal affairs, but if this is true, that Bettina and you are getting divorced, I feel we ought to be told. I can't believe that this will happen. I don't

## EDWIN GILBERT

Almost like an old man Everett lowered himself into a chair. It was true then, true. She had threatened it and he had not for an instant believed her. Betts had never followed through with any of her other threats.

Now he made his mind work incisively against the maelstrom of sensations that assailed him: before anything else he had to vindicate himself and then he had to win over Senior, get him to shift from critic to ally.

"If you would rather discuss this privately, Everett," offered Senior.

"No, sir," Everett responded over-forthrightly. "There's nothing I can't say to all of you—except that I knew nothing at all about this—I'm shocked—I can't believe it. This is Betts' way of——"

Cornelia interrupted the truth of what he was trying to say: "We want to try to help you children, Everett. I want you to understand that. That's why we're here."

"I understand that." Unwittingly he touched his damp forehead. "But I still can't put it together. Aunt Cornelia, how did this get——"

"Betts called. I spoke to her. She is flying to St. Croix tonight," said Teller.

"She——" The flatness of his father's voice crushed him, the finality of it brought the first impact. "She couldn't be," he finished feebly.

"She is, Everett," said his father.

"You knew nothing of this? No idea it might happen?" asked Senior.

"No—nothing——" Everett floundered. "Nothing. I——" He looked around the room and then his eyes rested on John.

John, he thought.

"You know now," he heard his father say.

Yes, he thought. He turned his gaze from John and bitterly confronted his father. "You sound as if you're pleased about it. If there's been trouble between Betts and me—we can thank you for part of it." His rage leaped out at the hated comic fig-

## SILVER SPOON

ure of the ancient collegian. "You're the one who's undermined her. She was always quoting you—those labored jokes about Horatio Alger and the Glenway fever—well, it worked, didn't it?"

"Stop that, son!" Teller cut in.

But Senior was quick to say, as Everett hoped he would, "If your father had his way we would all of us be loafing, content to live on principal."

Everett said, "Frankly, Uncle Horace, I didn't know how far this had gone. I don't think it's been any particular secret that things have not been going too well between us—but I never believed it would come to this. The basic issue has always been the same. Betts cannot accept the fact that there are certain times, unavoidable times, when work—the responsibilities I've undertaken and feel deeply about—have to come before anything else." He paused to let this statement sink in. Then he said, "I'm afraid I've been somewhat to blame, I'm not trying to say I haven't. I've been unable to get Betts to take a sympathetic attitude toward the situation." He waited, knowing Senior would voice his approval, his endorsement.

But Senior said, "That is fine, Everett. We know, all of us, what you've been doing at the company. However, a man with your capabilities ought to be able to run his own house and not allow his domestic life to deteriorate."

"Yes——" Everett was shaken for an instant. "Yes, sir, that's true. But my domestic life has not always been in my hands." He peered directly at Teller.

"That is regrettable, Everett, regrettable." Senior's sympathy came readily. "But Betts is a fine person. We all of us admire her. What we had hoped to hear you say, Everett, was that you could stop this from happening."

"I'm certain I can." Everett replied with force.

"How?" asked Teller.

Everett saw John stir in his chair.

"Couldn't you see Bettina?" said Cornelia. "Couldn't you go

## EDWIN GILBERT

itated. "Well before we talk any more, how do you feel about it? It would be pointless, Everett, if you want this to happen——"

"No—of course I don't. You must know that, Aunt Cornelia. I can't even believe——" He faltered again and a sickening sensation gripped him as he pictured the prospect before him. "Of course, I won't allow it to happen. Betts and I have too much to let it happen."

Senior nodded. "Those photographs in *Enterprise*—you understand, Everett, that we cannot let them be published if anything comes of this. Those pictures of you and Betts—you realize how untenable that would be."

"Everett——" He heard Cornelia's softly brisk voice. "Tell me something, dear. You do look—well, rather shaken—would you prefer talking to me or Horace alone? What I mean to say is that you don't seem very confident about stopping this."

"Naturally—I'm upset, Aunt Cornelia. What did you expect?" He had to add: "But I'll straighten it out." He rose. "I'm going to Hawthorne."

"Good boy," said Teller.

"I'll expect you to call us as soon as you can, Everett," said Senior. "We'll wait on your call. Best of luck to you."

"Thank you, sir," said Everett. But confronted now with the visit to Hawthorne, knowing what the family expected him to accomplish, he was seized with panic. "Aunt Cornelia"—he summoned a smile—"I think it would be helpful if you could call Betts after I leave. Your opinion means a great deal to her."

"I'll be glad to, Everett," said Cornelia. "I had wanted to before, but Horace thought we'd better wait until we spoke with you."

They were all standing now peering at him. He could not gather hope, only the dismal prospect held him, the knowledge that he would have to return to Glenway alone, and that it would be a defeat with which he could not cope.

It was now, as there was a general movement toward the door, that he saw how John hung back, still silent, discreet, too

anonymous. Without warning Everett's desperateness soared beyond control and the damned up resentment of more than twenty years erupted.

"I would just like to say—" Everett tried to keep his voice steady against the pulsing in his throat as he looked away from John to Horace Senior—"if—if this doesn't shape up, it will not be entirely my fault or because I haven't tried. If it doesn't —" Everett pushed out the words, "you might ask John about it."

He strode out then, and the startled hush behind him gave him the single consolation that could make his mission bearable.

# 17

The *Enterprise* pictures had finally been approved after Everett Gowden had telephoned from Long Island to say that Bettina had agreed not to go to St. Croix. The truth, however, actually was that Bettina had only agreed to delay the divorce to allow a discreet period to pass after the issue of *Enterprise* appeared. John Gowden returned to Glenway on Tuesday October tenth after three days spent in Washington. It had been a constructive trip. The National Park Service had agreed to allot an additional twenty-five thousand dollars to Colonial Chaddford.

And while he'd been in Washington a new avenue of interest had been unexpectedly opened to him. Myron C. Harppin of the Federal Housing Administration had called on him at the Carleton to ask if he would be interested in taking over an important post at their New York office. He declined, though the offer had been flattering. Harppin had then made another proposal, offering him the chairmanship of their consultants' board, which meant spending three days a month in Washington. John had found himself stimulated by the prospect. The idea of par-

## EDWIN GILBERT

told Harppin he would give the matter serious and favorable consideration.

The news that greeted him when he got to the house for dinner that evening was very disturbing. Horace Junior, his father reported, had taken ill.

"Caught cold in the rain at the steeplechase," Senior said.

His mother said, "He's developed a high fever. It's flu."

"Is Dr. Knowling——" John began.

"Yes, he's there," Cornelia said. "And he's not even trying to present his customary cheerful front."

"How was your trip?" his father asked presently.

He said it had been very satisfactory. That was all he said. He could not share his feelings with them. He could not speak about the prospect of government service, for this was anathema to the old man.

When the demitasses were served in the summer drawing room, and they were all seated around the fireplace, Cornelia cleared her throat and said, "John—I did mean to ask you. Were you at Hawthorne by any chance?"

"Hawthorne?"

"At Bettina's," his father put in bluntly.

"No."

"Have you seen anything of Everett?" Cornelia asked.

"No. Not since the steeplechase."

"Why not?" Senior peered at him.

"I prefer not to," he said.

"Why?" Senior persisted.

He said, "Because I thought his innuendo was in the worst taste and inexcusable."

"Why didn't you at least deny it at the time, John?" his mother asked.

He didn't answer.

"You must tell us, dear," she said.

"Tell you what?"

Cornelia put down her cup. "Has there—is there anything between you and Betta?"



## SILVER SPOON

"Certainly not." He rose. "Excuse me. I'm going over to Junior's."

In defiance, he thought as he reached the front hall, he would have liked to go to Hawthorne this instant to see Betts; regardless of his family or hers, he ought to go straight out to Long Island: the greater the pressure on him the more his defiance flared. But he wouldn't go near Betts. Not now or ever.

Horace Junior was asleep when John reached his house. He only stayed a short while, talking to Knowling and Lucy. Lucy looked haggard. She refused to have a nurse in attendance; she had been looking after Junior on a round-the-clock schedule. Her devotion was awesome, he thought later, driving back to the main house. It was curious about Lucy. He supposed he had always underrated her or he hadn't made the effort to see in her any especially notable qualities. He had always regarded her as a dull stick, uninspired. But ever since Junior's heart attack, he had revised his opinion; he understood more clearly what Lucy's contribution to Junior's life had been. Junior, who had always revered and emulated his father, had also succeeded in making a marriage that had the same kind of rockbed solidarity as Senior's.

As soon as he reached his quarters, he saw the envelope on his table. Evidently his mother or father had also seen it; it was obviously why they had questioned him with such concern at dinner. They had recognized the handwriting or the postmark. He opened Betts' letter at once.

*Hawthorne,  
Brayley, N.Y.*

JOHN DEAREST:

You will have heard long before you read this, what has happened. In case there has been any Glenwayish misinterpretation about it, I wanted you to know that it is definite—horrid but definite.

Everett came to Hawthorne last Saturday. He does want a reconciliation though I know it would never work out. Of course I have agreed not to start the divorce until after the issue of *Estimote* is settled. I think I shall

## EDWIN GILBERT

before (in my state how could I have?) but I realize what a field day people would have had reading about the divorce and seeing the pictures—and that caption: “American country life at its best.”

I hope the clan does not think me too skunky, but I'll have to take that risk. On this end, Mother, of course, is still somewhat dazed and keeps muttering, “What about those two precious children?” But I do have definite plans for my life and I intend (for once) to follow through.

The purpose of this letter, however, is something else. Brace yourself. After Everett left Hawthorne, I received a call from Cornelia and another from poor old Teller. Both of them were quite panicky about what my good husband insinuated about you at the family clambake, and they reported it to me—obviously hoping I could shed some light on it. I didn't. But you must know, John darling, that it is quite true.

I can see you as you read this, getting crimson right up to those sweet big ears of yours and fishing for denials all over the place—not that I am any paragon of courage, for I am only putting in a letter what I will never mention to your face again. Anyway, there it is. My two sweet and hardy offspring join me in love to the light of my life.

EVER,  
BETTS

He put the letter down. He tried, without any success whatsoever, to be calm and reasonable, tried again to evaluate the situation in which he found himself. It didn't work. He wished he had torn up the letter before reading it.

What unsettled him was the opposing pull of his feelings, the feeling that somehow he couldn't think of Betts as a separate entity, face up to what Betts could mean to him, Betts whom he had for so long given up, and who, because of the new circumstances, was lost to him.

Thinking of Betts he could only feel that there was something vaguely unwholesome and condemning about this kind of inter-family alignment. He had to acknowledge the fact that it would create the kind of implication which his family could not easily tolerate and which would make Betts' position intolerable too.

## 18

The account of Horace Slater Gowden, Junior's death appeared on the front pages of *New York Times* and *Herald Tribune*. Messages of condolence arrived from the President of the United States, the governors of New York and Connecticut and Massachusetts, the National Board of Real Estate, the presidents of the New York Central and the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroads, the Hume National Bank, the Metropolitan and Union League clubs, Harvard University, Lakely College for Women and the score of other institutions which had been beneficiaries of Gowden endowments or grants.

The mails also contained hundreds of tributes not only from employees of the corporation but from peripheral associates and strangers.

To John Gowden this avalanche of messages signified clearly that Junior's modest but purposeful activities through the years had gained for the Gowdens a new and quiet good will; at least it indicated that Junior's life and work, guided by Philip Doncourt, had helped to reshape public sentiment.

The funeral, apart from the pallbearers, was attended only by the immediate family. Betts had come up with her mother, Mrs. Marsh, and had accompanied Everett, Teller and Ivy to the Gowden vault in Chaddford Old Burial Ground. She had spoken only briefly to John afterward, and then had returned to Hawthorne.

Junior, who had lived mainly in the knowledge of his father's esteem, had really never been sure of what others thought of him, or in what regard he was held by the family. How touched, possibly even surprised, Junior would have been, John thought, if he could have seen the effect his death had had on the family.

## EDWIN GILBERT

was also the most contained before the others; and Cornelia, as always abetting her husband's emotions, sustained without show her own sorrow.

For Lucy, in a different way, the ordeal was inexpressibly painful; she was too shattered to conceal it and she could not bring herself to communicate with the others. For days afterward she spent most of her time sitting beneath the ancient apple tree in the garden—the quiet place of the years with Junior—sitting there wordless, still spent, impotent against the magnitude of her loss.

During this time, John's father kept to himself in his leather-walled study; no one saw him except Cornelia. It was not until the fifth day after the funeral that he sent for John; he asked him to read aloud all the messages of condolence, and John read them—the sincere ones from friends and associates, and the more strategic, rhetorical ones from institutions. When John had finished, when he looked up at his father, he saw for the first time in the posture of the old man's indestructible frame, in the robust ruddy face, the ravages of his grief.

On the sixth day Senior ordered the Waiver of Notice—that legal document which was necessary to call and hold an emergency meeting of the board of directors for the purpose of electing a new president.

Then the period of mourning went into its second and inevitable phase. It was to be a phase, John soon discovered, that canceled sentiment and replaced it with the less pleasant manifestations of power and survival.

On the Sunday afternoon of October 29, nine days before the board of directors meeting was scheduled, Madeline Gowden Trimble received a private visit from Leonard Fole.

The subject of this visit, like that of other conversations pertinent to the forthcoming board meeting, was the same: John Gowden.

Fole, in squire's clothes of darkest green tweed and brogues by Olivant of London and black silk mourning tie, felt that

## SILVER SPOON

peak of confidence. Confronting Madeline in the hallway, he said, "Just wanted a brief chat with you, Madeline. If I might."

"Yes," she said guardedly, and led him out to the rear terrace.

"What is it, Leonard?" Madeline said, seating herself on a terrace chair.

Fole sat down across from her. "Was having a chat with your father—we happened to be discussing the matter of Mr. John." He smiled blandly. "Along that line, I wanted to know if I could count on your support. Mr. Senior assures me I will have his."

"Support?" Madeline asked.

"If John becomes president of the company," Fole stated flatly, "he may be rash enough to want me to leave."

"Oh." She crossed her legs and stared out to the view of the river. Then she said, "Well, really, Leonard, I don't quite understand why you've come to me. This isn't to be a meeting of the stockholders. Don't you think it's Avery you ought to see?"

"I could," Fole agreed affably. "But I thought you might prefer to do the talking yourself. Avery is secretary of the company and a director and I'd like to know I have his support. I'll put it this way, Madeline. You might point out to Avery that he's too necessary in his present position to accept any possible nomination for president."

"But——"

"And," Fole proceeded slowly, simply, "it shouldn't be much trouble for you to persuade him to cast his vote for Everett."

"Everett?"

"Yes," said Fole. "And one other point: I am sure a smart chap like Avery will pay attention when you suggest that no matter what happens, he will resist any move to have Leonard Fole leave the company."

"You expect me to ask Avery a thing like that?" said Madeline. "You couldn't possibly be serious."

"Would you prefer me to speak to Avery?" Fole countered quietly. "I could go directly to him and ask for his support, but that might lead to some sort of a misunderstanding."

## EDWIN GILBERT

man, and if Avery failed to co-operate I could easily forget myself."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean I would prefer not to forget myself and bring to his attention some of those little trips of yours," Fole answered.

He waited just long enough to see her blanch, a spasm of comprehension wrench across her finely modeled face. He saw her swallow. Then he calmly proceeded.

"Now there's no need to get into a boil, Madeline. I consider myself a friend of yours. A chap knows you all these years and he doesn't like to have to go to your husband carrying tales about some of the times I've seen you away from Glenway——"

"I don't believe you," she broke in. "If you think because you found my——"

"Your wallet? That's right. I did, didn't I? Almost forgot about it. Now you take that chap you just happened to meet in Central Park last August——" Fole stopped, not needing to embellish the incident, needing only to see her face and the way her hands worked.

She stood up, peered frantically toward the house. And when, finally, she was able to speak, she said, "I've got a new gardener coming for an interview, Leonard. If you'll excuse me."

"Righto," he said pleasantly, and rose from his chair.

When she reached the terrace door, she turned back. "I'll try to speak to Avery when he returns."

"Thank you, Madeline," he said.

On another afternoon, three days later, Everett Teller Gowden was also devoting himself to specific aspects of the forthcoming board meeting. To this end he decided the time had come to have a major talk with Leonard Fole, this being necessary before approaching the others.

As he waited for Fole to appear, he leaned back in the plump black leather desk chair of his old-fashioned, neo-Senior office, and, projecting himself to the Tuesday when he would meet the

## SILVER SPOON

other directors of the company, he reflected as objectively as he could, on the array of his accomplishments of the past several years: they were specific marks in his favor.

The long, conscientious labors represented, even in the coldest light, a testimony of his indisputable ability not only as a vice president of the company, but as a candidate for its presidency—if not this year certainly in the not-too-distant future.

It had to be admitted, of course, that the impending divorce was a specific strike against him. It had, therefore, seemed discreet to stay away from Glenway on weekends, to let the matter die down. He lived in the apartment in town, which was much too large and lonely for one person.

Yet, he reflected now, if he had it all to do over again, he would not want it to be otherwise. Though the loss of Betts and the children had left him stunned at first, the primary emotion he harbored was one of deep vanity—the fear that his cousin John would, or had, replaced him in Betts' affections. At heart he yearned to be unencumbered, so that he could dedicate himself fully to his abiding passion: business, the sweep to consummate power.

"Mr. Fole here to see you, Mr. Gowden," his secretary's voice announced over the intercom.

When Fole entered the ponderous and gloomy chamber that was Everett's office, he took the chair closest to the desk.

Everett put on his horn-rimmed glasses. "Leonard," he said gravely, "I wanted to have a talk with you in confidence, in the strictest confidence. As you know, I've always respected your judgment. That's why I want it now."

"Thanks," said Fole, not without some show of gratification. "I take it you want to have a bit of a chat about the board meeting." Everett nodded. "Offhand, Leonard," he said, "how does it shape up to you? I assume you've picked up a few items here and there?"

"Righto," said Fole. "I've had an informal chat with a few of the chaps."

## EDWIN GILBERT

as John is concerned, it will be an open-and-shut case?" As he waited for the man's reply, Everett found himself involuntarily titillated by another aspect of the future: how gratifying it would be, he mused, if the news reached Betts that he had been elected, had defeated John or Lee or Avery. It was almost too overwhelming to contemplate now.

"Open-and-shut case?" Fole said. "Yes. If you mean will Mr. Senior push it? Indubitably. On the other hand, Mr. Senior knows better than anyone else what Johnny Boy's handicaps are. That's what's going to have to be played up."

"Yes." Everett paused thoughtfully. "What do the others think though? Lee, for example? Or Avery? And what about Oliver Wessels and Leggett and Spence Goelen? I'm sure we can count on Phil Doncourt giving his vote to John."

"That he will." Fole then said, "When anyone asks me for my private opinion, I can tell you I say I'm an Everett Gowden man straight down the line. I'm not the kind of chap who forgets past considerations, Everett."

"Thank you, Leonard." Everett smiled thinly. "Do you think Lee would give up Gowden Construction? I have my own idea on that, but I'd like to hear yours."

"Lee? He'd give it up in a minute. But Mr. Senior wouldn't go along. Neither would Spence Goelen."

"Yes." Everett's hope soared the merest fraction. "Actually both Leggett and Goelen are out. And Wessels is too old. And Doncourt cannot be considered."

Fole nodded.

"That leaves Avery."

"Avery and Johnny Boy," said Fole.

Everett said, "Avery is a good man."

"That he is," Fole said, with a curiously smug smile.

"At least his record is solid, if inauspicious. It's safe and sound," said Everett with faint regret. "I think Avery could take it away—even from John."

"He could. But even Mr. Senior thinks he's too bloody conservative. Like to ask you this Everett, I wonder what you think



## SILVER SPOON

but suppose I told you Avery might be persuaded to turn down a nomination——”

“You——”

“Your friend Fole is not on the board, but I think it fair to say he’s a chap who can control a vote or two.”

Something in the man’s radiating confidence caused Everett to lean forward. “Leonard,” he said, “would you do it—definitely?”

Fole answered at once. “As long as I can count on you if the time comes when I need every support.”

“Leonard, I assure you, you’ll have my endorsement.”

“It will mean a bloody fight.”

“I have every intention of fighting for you,” Everett said.

“If Johnny Boy is——”

“If John is elected,” Everett promised.

Fole said, “His first gun will be aimed at me.”

“I’ll fight it, and we both know my uncle Horace will,” Everett said, eager now to seize any bargaining advantage. “Therefore we can count on Leggett and Goelen to stay in line. I’ll see to it, Leonard, that your status is not changed. After all, you are a tradition.”

Fole, with a smile that was almost pathetic, nodded and then rose. He said, “I appreciate this chat we’ve had, Everett. Good of you to stand by a friend.” He turned to leave, moved to the door and stopped. A certain wistfulness shadowed his large, unhandsome face. “I miss Mr. Junior, miss him already and he’s been in his grave less than three weeks,” Fole said with unmistakable sincerity. “He was one of the finest gentlemen I ever knew.”

“Yes,” Everett said.

On that Sunday, in the fieldstone house of Madeline and Avery Trimble, the subject of the forthcoming board meeting had further ramifications. For Madeline, who was still unnerved after Fole’s private visit, had to confront her husband on a

## EDWIN GILBERT

At midafternoon, she started down to Avery's library on the first floor, unable to postpone the visit any longer.

Inside the white-plastered chamber, she saw his bulky square frame at the Governor Winthrop desk, bent over an array of documents.

"General"—she took a deep breath and stepped up behind him and kissed the back of his neck.

He turned. "What is it, dear?" Avery smiled. "You know I do have this report that must be out of the way before the meeting."

"Meeting——" She grasped the word at once. She stood behind him and made her finger tips stroke the back of his neck. "Oh, yes, I'd forgotten," she said, adding: "But now that you mention it, there is an awfully tedious problem we ought to get out of the way first."

He rose and went to the small rose linen settee, and from behind his rimless glasses, his brown eyes held their impatient, puzzled gaze upon her.

"Leonard Fole was here before, Avery——" She began and stopped: a shudder of terror passed through her.

"Fole," her husband said. "What did he want?"

She hesitated. "Oh, he's such a worm, of course. But, would you believe it, Avery, he had the cheek to ask me to use my influence with you about Tuesday's meeting."

"But, Mad," Avery said, "that's preposterous."

"Isn't it?" She laughed or tried to. "Except that I suppose it really isn't. It isn't simply because—to avoid a perfectly hideous mess with Father, we'll have to co-operate with him—just temporarily, of course——"

Avery frowned. "What on earth are you trying to say, Mad?"

"Well—you know him and you know what a worm he is. Undoubtedly he has enough information about all of us to hang us high—oh, he really hasn't, but there's just enough truth to make things very messy." She paused. "I wouldn't even have spoken or listened to him if it weren't for Father."

## SILVER SPOON

"What does he want?"

"He wants you not to vote for John."

"He what!" Avery exclaimed.

"What it amounts to," Madeline went on rapidly, "is that he wants you to take a stand. If you can't prevent John's being elected, Fole wants you to promise you'll fight any move made to dismiss him."

Avery shook his head. "Why, that's outrageous! It's——"

"As I said, darling, he is in a position where he can demand it." She gripped the chair, pressed forward, facing Avery's quick resistance. "I couldn't go into all of it now possibly, Avery," she improvised. "Except to tell you that Fole has acquired—and of course filed—a good deal of sordid nonsense about you—and——"

"Me?" he echoed sharply.

"Well——" She swallowed. "He did make quite a nasty thrust in your direction. Oh, he didn't come out with it directly, but the way he implied it, was much worse. It—it's about that Pentagon business during the war——" And as lightly as she could she recalled for him the Glenway gossip and the sly jokes about him and one of his assistants, Lieutenant Gwen Johnston who had accompanied him on many of his field trips of inspection of properties and installations out of Washington. "We both know there was nothing between you and Gwen, but Fole can recite dates and places and heaven only knows what else—it even shocked me, the way he made you look. Oh, it's nauseating, but all I'm trying to do is show you what we are up against——" She stopped before his implacable gaze. "For heaven's sake, Avery, stop acting as if you were guilty!"

"Guilty?" He stormed, and got up. "I'm going to see just what this——"

"Avery——" She followed him, her legs unbearably weighted. "You mustn't—you can't do anything about it——"

"I can't?" He turned. "Now listen to me, Madeline, if you think for one instant that I'm going to let him——"

## EDWIN GILBERT

"It—it isn't only you——" The words spurted forth unwittingly. "There was more—it was me, too."

"You?" He stared at her.

"Yes"—she had to hurry on—"little incidents—trivial, really—but they add—they do add up to rather shocking—— Oh, it's really nonsense, things I'd completely forgotten——"

"Madeline——"

"I mean——" she began, trying now to improvise on the truth — "like the time I went to that prom at Princeton and didn't come back Sunday night—there were six of us and we had to stay in this hideous motel on the way home because my date got sick. It was nothing, but I had to lie about it to Mother and Father. It was one of those things any girl——"

Avery kept staring at her. "You got yourself into something like that?" he asked.

"Of course I did. But it was perfectly innocent." She felt a brief respite as she saw him turn now and go back to the linen settee. "Oh, General, relax—nothing happened, I assure you. But what is appalling, darling, is that evidently Fole had made it—well, it amounts to a labor of love, this compiling his history of all of us——" She quickened her words. "Why, do you know what that worm did?"

Avery was silent, his body rigid, as if stricken.

She had to finish it: "When I was in New York on the Junior League work—when you were in Albany—during that hideous heat this summer, I took a walk through the park and—and he was there all the time following me, actually following me. He didn't see anything of course, but he claims he did, he implied that I was talking to some strange man—if you can imagine anything that fantastic! Oh, it's perfect nonsense— all the things he piled up, but he can make it sound so hideously impressive——"

"Madeline."

Breathless she had to let him speak then, she waited and her body rocked with terror.

He stood up, his eyes fixed on her.

## SILVER SPOON

is so vile, I will not even discuss it any further. I refuse." Then he said, "I will not only back up John, but I will insist—even if I have to oppose your father—that Fole has to be thrown out. This has gone beyond all reason or decency!"

She held her hands clamped tightly together, overcome now by the tide of his reaction. Before she could speak, he started away from her, moving to the door.

"Avery——"

"I'm going to Fole."

"Avery—I told you—you can't—Avery——" Out of the paralysis that held her she fell upon a final, desperate hope. "Avery——" her voice came low, tightly—"I could never forgive myself—or you—if anything happened to Father as a result of this!"

She waited, conscious of the accelerated pulsing in her chest as she watched him, his head bent, stride away from her, go to his desk, stare down, his short massive figure taut with rage or indecision.

"Mad——" He turned after the agonizing interval. "Mad, you've never shown that much concern for your father. On the contrary, at times you've——" He shook his head. "But now you—why are you so suddenly concerned for him?"

"Because——" her voice rose harshly in protest to his shrewd and pertinent question, "because he *is* my father!" With the utterance, tears blurred in her eyes, springing there not out of re-born love but out of hysteria. "I've never meant much to him—and it's never mattered much to me, but that doesn't mean it's right——" She stopped; she shut her eyes and opened them again. "It's different now, Avery—he's lost the one person who—oh, I—we can't do this to him now!"

She could not be sure, as she saw him start haltingly for the door, whether he nodded in final agreement or whether the movement of his head meant something else. But he was visibly shaken and he left her, she now thought, as if he had to get off alone to reconcile himself to the course of action for which she

"The meeting will come to order," said Horace Gowden, Senior, setting into motion on Tuesday morning, November 7, the official business of the board of directors.

It was an overcast and blustery day, and the light that filtered into the Fifth Avenue windows on the fifth floor of the Gowden Building was gray as stone. But since it was ten A.M. Senior did not permit the chandelier or the wall-bracket lights to be turned on: so that the nine dark-suited men assembled around the long walnut table in the walnut-paneled, oval-shaped directors' room, formed a murky and solemn tableau.

"As you all know——" Senior began. "As you all know, the purpose of this meeting is to choose a new president. There is more involved today than the duty of election. We are not merely replacing one man with another. We are to elect a man whose predecessor gave his life in dedication to his responsibility. More than that, he tried, and I think he succeeded, to invest his associates with that same spirit of responsibility." Senior paused, his veined hands pressed flat against the table's edge: "Horace Gowden, Junior, began his work in the downtown offices," Senior continued. "As most of you know, he started out as errand boy during summer vacations from school. He was not given, nor did he ever ask for privilege. By his efforts alone he gained trust. He graduated *cum laude* from Harvard University. He did this while working at outside jobs and tutoring. He did not rely on financial help from home. He worked to gain his sense of values. When he was twenty-seven he became second vice president, at twenty-nine he was executive vice president and my indispensable aide." Senior's eyes fell briefly on John. Then, continuing, he said, "I think we would all agree that he would have accomplished this if his name had been Smith or Jones. Against certain of his father's judgments, he instigated company expansion."

## SILVER SPOON

with which you are familiar today." Senior paused. "When his father began his partial retirement, it was only possible because Horace Junior was at the helm as president, heading the company with intelligence and the strictest probity. It must be said now, that this man labored under the handicap of a past that his father, grandfather and great-grandfather created—it was not always a creditable past. There were those of us who acted rashly or with avarice and importunity in the past and who helped found a disagreeable, though not always justified, turn of public sentiment."

The hush in the room reflected the astonishment of those present: it was the first time, as far as John knew, that Senior had ever conceded admission to his own or his forebear's defections.

"This is mentioned now because the past president—with the good help of Philip Doncourt—managed to overcome to some degree, certain stigmas attached to the repute of the firm." Senior paused. "The hundreds of messages we have received from leaders in business and government have testified to the caliber of our past president." Senior cleared his throat, and again his piercing gaze was directed at John. "That is why it was said that today's meeting carries with it special responsibility and magnitude. The eulogy of a father for his son may therefore be justifiably pardoned," Senior concluded. Hastily—too hastily, as if the movement would help discipline his emotion, he reached for his water glass. He drank, placed the goblet down again, then looked up. "Nominations," he said, "are in order."

"Mr. Chairman," Avery Trimble spoke at once, his normally bland, anonymous face was thrust forward, feverishly determined, "I wish to nominate John Gowden."

Though John had known his brother-in-law would make this move, he was puzzled and vaguely disturbed by Avery's curious agitation.

"Second the nomination," said the silver-haired lawyer, Wessels.

## EDWIN GILBERT

Carl Leggett, forty-four, vice president in charge of the maintenance division of Gowden properties stirred in his chair. He said, "I nominate Mr. Everett Gowden, sir."

John saw his cousin Everett cock his head slightly as if in modest surprise. Everett and Carl were allies. Carl Leggett had always resented his own status as an outsider, a fact which Everett had been quick to exploit: the horizons of the older man would widen, he knew, if Everett Gowden came to be elected today, or more reasonably, in the future.

"Second the nomination," said Philip Doncourt for the purpose of hurrying the procedure.

"Any other nominations?" asked Senior. He paused. "I declare the nominations closed."

The merest smile touched the elegant Doncourt's face as he turned to Senior. "Mr. Chairman, I take it that you are not going to make any recommendations yourself?"

"I believe," Senior answered shortly, "my position is known to the board."

"Mr. Chairman, I move the meeting be opened to discussion and that to give us a freer hand, candidates leave the room in turn so that we may be able to speak without restraint or embarrassment to all concerned."

"Second the motion," Carl Leggett said.

John Gowden went to his old office at the east end of the fifth floor to wait while the members of the board brought into play their final maneuvers.

Inside the plain, white-walled office, he seated himself at the glass-topped desk. He reached into his inside coat pocket and brought out the sheaf of notes he'd prepared for use in the event that he was elected. For the past ten days he had been going about these preparations on his own, unobtrusively. He had gone from one bureau of city government to another, talking with officials, gathering the kind of facts and information he knew he would need to buttress his position. In the course of



## SILVER SPOON

these investigations he had come upon a surprising amount of data and he had been very encouraged by what he'd found. In fact, he had become so stimulated that he found himself almost eager to take advantage of the chance the presidency offered.

Until this morning. Then he had floundered. Facing the board, again immersed in that climate of pressure and conformity, self-survival and power-play, he had slowly sensed the crumbling of his spirit, his enthusiasm and ambition, even the urge to fight for those concepts which had inspired him during the course of his investigation. . . .

He rose from the desk and began to walk around the office. He glanced at his watch and hoped the discussion in the board room would be a prolonged one. He needed time.

In his restiveness, his impatience with himself, he looked down absently at the new issue of *Enterprise*. He sat down and opened it again to the portfolio of Glenway pictures, the magazine fell open at the page, the upper half of which contained a photograph of himself in the jeep; it was like coming upon the face of someone else, a long-forgotten companion of some happy bygone summer.

As he examined it, as he turned another page to the color studies of the terrain and of the main house, a nostalgia, sweet and painful swept over him.

The face of his brother confronted him: Horace Junior, in the seldom-worn jaunty sports coat. His smile, though, fixed and determined, graced the pinched countenance as he stood beside Lucy in front of the ivy-latticed entryway of his house.

Horace . . .

He turned another page of the portfolio, and then another, sitting there waiting in the stillness.

When his attention was drawn to another of the photographs—of Betts—he stirred for the first time, accepting the sight or its special evocation, bending to it now. Bettina. The familiar figure, slender and vivacious; the short dark hair, the bangs, and

## EDWIN GILBERT

the small resolute chin. She was laughing, and he remembered, heard it clearly. Only now, studying the vivid blueness of the eyes, he could see in them the graveness.

How uncanny, he thought, that Grace should have caught all of it in that single photograph. Or prophetic that she . . .

"Mr. John——" At the open door he saw the bald, pink scalp of the nervous Kellog. "Mr. Trimble has asked me to tell you that——"

"Yes." John rose and followed the man out.

They must still have been talking about him, for the muffled sound of their voices ceased as he opened the door. He walked to his chair at the side of the long table and sat down.

"We will proceed with the vote," Senior announced.

Spencer Goelen said, "May I suggest vote by ballot this time, sir? I think a show of hands would possibly be unfair."

"I move we——" Everett began, naturally wishing to establish the motion at once.

But Senior spoke up: "You may so move. But I am opposed to it. I understand why it might seem desirable in some cases, but I'd like to ask all of you to dispense with it at this time. I have not made excessive demands today. But on this I would like your co-operation. I trust it is clear that I am asking this not to challenge the voting. My purpose is to see where each man stands. I want the new president to see where each man stands. This will help insure a more clean-cut future for all of us." Senior's assertion was made in a manner that, of course, brought instant agreement from the group. "Thank you," he said and turned to Avery, on his right. "Will the secretary call the vote."

Avery shifted the papers before him, his blunt pallid face was animated and intense. "For Everett Gowden," Avery said.

John looked across the table at his cousin. Everett touched his horn-rimmed glasses, then brought his hand down. He sat erect, the muscles of his jaw flexed tight, then untensed as a single hand rose, that of Carl Leggett's.

## SILVER SPOON

Avery made another note on the pad before him.

"For John Gowden."

John did not look up. There was no need to. But he could hear the sound of rising arms around the table, like a ruffling of flags.

Almost before Avery finished his formal acknowledgment of the vote, John rose. He put up his hand, then quickly sat down again.

"Yes, John?" Avery, puzzled, looked over at him.

"I cannot accept this——" he started, aware now of an almost imperceptible movement among Everett and the others. "I cannot accept this, until I make—I have to define my position first." He turned to his father. "I feel I owe it to the board to make clear the fact that I will not be giving my full time here. That is, I feel there are important benefits for the company by beginning a closer association with government. What I am getting at is that I am accepting an offer to join a board of consultants for the Federal Housing Administration—in New York." And then before anyone could speak, he went on: "Also, I would like to make clear certain changes in policy I have in mind. The shift, as I see it, ought to go in two main directions. First, I feel the time has come to begin the gradual liquidation of many of our Manhattan holdings."

His father watched him rigidly but, surprisingly, said nothing.

"John," Everett said, shaking his head incredulously, "you couldn't possibly be serious?"

He nodded, seeing now that most of the other members had not altered the flinty expressions with which they had greeted his statement.

"By liquidation I do not mean total selling. I mean it in two phases: selling and rehabilitation. I have a list of those properties I think ought to be sold. But it's mainly the rehabilitation I want to concentrate on. Beginning with the West Side cold-water flats, the group on Tenth Avenue beginning with the Auerbench

## EDWIN GILBERT

wasteland. I know it produces income at eighteen dollars monthly per room. But that is because we have practically no maintenance. The buildings are standing only by the narrowest margin of safety. I think everyone knows what is happening there with the Puerto Rican problem among others—— What I'm getting at," John went on, "is that we can increase that income by rehabilitation and at the same time clean up the problems that exist. I've been talking with Mrs. Orran, of the Housing Commission. I'd like to tell you what she's done with the New Caledonia project. There were seven tenements, housing about six hundred people, Puerto Ricans and Italians mostly. There were tremendous tensions, crime and delinquency. Mrs. Orran persuaded the owner not to tear down the buildings. She took over and worked with the city. The Welfare Department was co-operative because most of the tenants were on relief. Almost every violation of the Multiple Dwelling Law and the Sanitary Code was present. What has happened since the rehabilitation is very exciting. Tensions are disappearing, the Puerto Ricans are becoming integrated, unemployment among the tenants has dropped more than fifty percent, vandalism among the children has almost gone, the entire area behind the buildings, which had become a garbage heap, has been cleared and replaced with gardens. The landlord reports that revenue is up and, more important, rents are being met promptly." He stopped, somewhat astonished by the length of his talk. He waited, certain that his father would intercede. But Senior sat there in silence.

John said, "This is what I mean by rehabilitation, what I think can, and has to be done. I think the board ought to know how I feel on other matters," he went on. "I won't take up your time with details. But I am afraid we will have to do something about the present system of employee benefits. In most cases we are meeting only the minimum demands of Federal or union rule. This will have to be changed. I don't think we have any choice—not any more. In this connection, I would also like

## SILVER SPOON

to see a loosening of the present policy of personnel—yes, I know it is not an official policy as such, but I have made a check of other companies similar to ours, and in no other organization that I know of is there such an obvious show of discrimination toward certain minority groups. Aside from the fact that this is a pretty shameful situation, I think we have lost the chance of availing the company of a number of superior people.”

Senior said, “Anything else, John?”

“Yes,” he said, though now his confidence, his forcefulness seemed to be waning. “This does not properly have a place at this meeting, I know that. But it ought to be mentioned. I plan to use my prerogative as president for the purpose of dismissing Leonard Fole.”

“Nothing else?” His father’s voice seemed almost ominous.

“Well—not for the time——” he began.

“Seems to me,” Senior said, “you’ve omitted a few items.”

“I was trying to summarize——” John halted, only now grasping his father’s statement. “What do you mean?”

“You failed to tell us about your visit to the New York Housing Authority,” said the old man. “You omitted your conference with the executive secretary as well as the fact that you went on record to your friend Mr. Chute, that he would be given a position of consequence with Gowden Realty——”

He stared at his father, mystified at first by the completeness of his information.

“I believe,” Senior went on, “you also omitted your visit to the Commission of Parks and Playgrounds where you encouraged them to think we might generously turn over to the city certain buildings which could be condemned by them and converted into recreational areas for——”

“That’s not quite true. What I——” It occurred to him then, though he was so intent on what he was trying to say, that his belated suspicion scarcely angered him. “I take it,” he said, “that Fole brought you this information.”

## EDWIN GILBERT

"Yes," said Senior. "And a few other items, as well. I'd like to point out that he did this on his own, out of his interest for the company."

John was not discouraged.

He had made certain new discoveries about himself: through all these past years of enforced association with the company, he seemed to have acquired, as if by osmosis, a reservoir of knowledge and strength which, when put into play today, had brought out a kind of drive he never knew he possessed. So that now, he found he wanted to fight for the office: all the years of antagonism toward the family business seemed to have fired in him at this instant a wildly dogged will to gain the very thing he had never wanted. . . .

He said, "Since Fole has already gone about his usual business, I will admit that he did a good job. Most of his information is correct. Except"—John's voice rose—"except in the case of the Commissioner of Parks. The truth is that I did cite actual holdings which might—or ought to be condemned." In his growing belligerence he became bolder: "I cited the Larkson Corner, the Hallawall Block and two other income-producing properties that we ought to get rid of ultimately—if they don't collapse or burn down first. My offer of resignation still stands."

"It will not be accepted." Senior thrust his ruddy, white-crowned head forward, facing the group with an intimidating stare that demanded and got their immediate attention. "I speak for myself," Senior went on. "But I am sure I reflect the majority opinion. I cannot accept the offer of resignation. On the contrary, I will make every move necessary to hold you to office. I am certain"—again he turned his gaze, fierce and implacable, to the men before him, "that the board will back me. For a young man who has rarely been heard to speak more than a dozen words at a time I can say for all of us that the length and the content of your address this morning has been something of an experience. I would like to commend the new president on behalf of the board, for the thorough manner in which his case was prepared and presented. It proved some-

## SILVER SPOON

thing to me. All that needs to be proved." Senior, for the first time broke the granite sternness of his expression and unloosed his vigorous smile.

He rose and came around the table and grasped John's hand. "My congratulations, son. I know," his father continued with soft, paternal interest, "that your little grievance against poor Fole will be forgotten. You're going to be much too preoccupied with matters of—"

"I—" John faltered, recognizing only now what his father was up to. "I'm sorry. No. You know how I feel. Either Fole goes or I resign."

Senior returned to the head of the table. To Avery Trimble he said, "If the secretary will move to adjourn the meeting——"

But Avery shook his head. "Sir, I think the case of Fole had better be settled now." He paused, his thin lips pulled in a hard resolute line. "At least I want it understood that I am in full accord with John on this issue."

"You?" Senior frowned at him.

"Yes, sir." Avery Trimble faced the old man grimly, resolutely, and with a defiance of which John had never imagined him capable.

Senior's face grew grave. "Gentlemen," he said, and as he continued to speak, an uncharacteristic, perhaps, unwitting plea underscored his voice, "we are all aware of the unique position Fole occupies with us. Most of us regard him with many reservations. He is not without his faults, his crudities, perhaps some of his methods—" he paused—"but we must remember that he is a man who has not had the advantages of breeding or education. I am certain our new president will, out of respect for the chairman at least, reconsider—if the majority of the members demand it."

The hush in the oval chamber was, at first indeterminate: each man seemed to hope the other would volunteer a corroborating statement. John waited, and then he realized that too

## EDWIN GILBERT

became a silence no longer deadlocked, but obviously a statement in itself.

"I see," Senior said flatly. He turned to face John. "I would like to ask you, John, to let a short period pass. In the rashness of a moment like this, you——"

"I'm sorry, sir. It has to be either Fole or——"

"I see," Senior said then. And summoning with effort his old dominant force, not for an instant allowing the others to detect his wavering strength in defeat, he turned to Avery Trimble and in a firm, crisp voice asked the secretary to move for adjournment.

## 20

The dinner party at the Gowden town house on East Sixty-third Street was given by Cornelia "in honor of John," on Thursday night, two days after the board of directors' meeting.

It marked the first function of the season. For the beginning of the exodus from Glenway to New York was officially underway. From now on they would be going to Connecticut only for weekends and for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Senior started off on a round of family anecdotes, ending with a dryly humorous recapitulation of Tuesday's meeting. Standing before the white marble fireplace, he concluded his account with a wry look at John. "And so," Senior said, "my son is now at the helm. He has promised, with a ginger that was indeed alarming, to lead us into the poorhouse as rapidly as he can."

The long formal room echoed with the group's laughter; it was a high point. After that the evening slowly started downhill, conversation languished and except for the efforts of Philip Doncourt and Cornelia, the purpose of the party might have collapsed almost



## SILVER SPOON

The night was perhaps most trying for John. He had come home, fatigued from the day's work, had showered and put on his dinner clothes, gone downstairs, heartless for the evening ahead. He discovered that, whereas in the past he had always been a kind of fifth wheel at family conclaves, tonight he seemed to be its main force—the hub into which the spokes of interest and speculation converged.

He was unable to adjust readily to his new role. The nervous excitement of Tuesday had given way to a somber preoccupation with the burdens of his position. What made all of it more difficult was the tacit evasion of the names of Leonard Fole and Betts.

Disconcerting to him also, were his two sisters. Hester made no pretense of sociability. She sat glumly looking at him, and when they all went into the dining room, and were seated at the twenty-foot-long Duncan Phyfe table, Hester said, "Don't expect any congratulations from me. I'm really upset—I don't know how you ever let yourself do this——" And before he could answer or try to explain his feelings, Hester turned to Madeline across the table from her. "I suppose," she said, "you've told him it's perfectly splendid."

Madeline looked up, as if startled. "What? Oh, yes. Yes, I did."

"Are you well, Mad?" Cornelia said.

"Certainly I'm well," Madeline replied, and sat there once again, her food untouched, in a morose torpor.

It wasn't until they had returned to the drawing room for demitasses, that the evening regained some of its earlier conviviality. Philip Doncourt, at Cornelia's request had gone out into the pantry to fetch two capsules from the bottle kept there for Senior's use. Albert's small radio could be softly heard from the kitchen, and it was then that the butler called his attention to the latest weather news.

When Doncourt went back to the drawing room and gave Senior two pills (which the old man promptly pocketed), he

## EDWIN GILBERT

At once a new and lively mood gripped the group. For there was no topic so dear to Gowden hearts as the weather.

"Ethel," Philip Doncourt reported, "Ethel has apparently changed her mind and is headed for the Carolina coast, moving northeast."

John, hearing the news for the first time, found himself turning to his father, and with that same kind of concern for which he had often disparaged Junior, said, "If this should be a bad one, Father, maybe you ought to stay in town this weekend."

"Nonsense," said Senior, "I've never missed a storm or hurricane at Glenway yet. I have no intention of missing this one."

"Oh dear." Cornelia smoothed out the skirt of her dark violet taffeta gown. Then she looked over at Doncourt. "Though I must say, Philip, you're not going to scare me off."

"Better call George," Senior instructed John, "and tell him to see that we're properly battened down."

"The last one, last month—Doreen, wasn't it—there was such a fuss," Cornelia said. "We were all prepared after the radio warnings, and, of course, it passed out to sea."

John stood back from the others, by the window: the discontent that had held him all evening, undefined and nettling, kept asserting itself. He had no heart for the occasion, none at all. As he stood there now, a flash of remembrance, of summer, illuminated his bleak reflections: he saw Grace Anders once more as she had looked the night she'd come to Betts' and Everett's party, he saw Grace seated alone at the bow window watching him like a spectator disenchanted by the pantomime before her, seeing him in hushed combat with his father or with Betts—Betts, pacing the party, Betts close and teasing, letting only a little of her despair show—perhaps more of it would show soon, he thought now, the process of law would begin in the languid Virgin Islands. Six weeks, eight weeks, and then how long after. . . . Betts. . . .

"If you're not using that sherry, you might give it to me." Madeline's voice from behind him. As he turned she took the glass from his hand and replaced it with her empty one. "How

The chauffeur was driving the Senior Gowdens crosstown to the East River Drive for the trip back to Glenway that rain-slashed Friday noon, and he dropped John off at the garage to pick up his car.

As John waited for the car elevator to descend, the owner of the garage said, "Going to be a rough one this time, Mr. Gowden. I talked with my wife a couple minutes ago—she said Long Island's going to get this one smack on the head." He shook his head. "Your car is ready, Mr. Gowden."

He moved across the concrete floor to his car. Midway he halted, turned back and walked to the garage office. The impulse came without any warning, inarticulate but with the force of fresh-born or awakened conviction. He telephoned Hawthorne, and presently he heard her voice and he said, "Betts, when are you leaving?"

"What? Where are you?"

"In town. When are you leaving?" His voice was strained, over-loud. "I have to see you." An utterance seven years in the making.

"The flight's been canceled of course," she said. "I was going tonight. But there won't be any flights out of New York until the storm is——"

"Could you come in Betts?—Now?"

"Now?" There was a short pause, "Why, John?"

"Could you?"

"Yes."

He said, "No—you might get caught in it—I'll come out there. Is there some place where we could meet? That is, some place where there won't be any——"

"Oh," she said. "Let me see——" She suggested the name of a place near Old Westbury which was about ten miles southwest

## EDWIN GILBERT

It was two o'clock when he got there. She was waiting, standing in the vestibule, looking, he thought, very small. She wore a slate-blue wool suit. When they were settled at the table against the long bank of windows, she said, "What's happened, John? I'm sorry about that letter of mine—if it's that, I——"

"No," he said, "it's not the letter. It's nothing like that."

"Oh."

The waitress brought coffee. Neither of them touched it. "Betts——" He tried to meet her eyes, but his gaze held on the straight, dark bangs bordering her forehead. "At the party last night—I felt rotten. I kept asking myself why. I got all kinds of answers." He paused. "It wasn't until I was starting back for Glenway—in the garage—that I knew all the answers were wrong. They've always been wrong. That's why I called you." He paused. "Seven years and then suddenly in a garage, I——"

She picked up her gloves from the table and placed them on her lap. The rain kept thudding against the panes and gurgling overhead in the gutters. Very lightly she said, "I haven't congratulated you, John. Congratulations."

"Never mind that."

"Are you pleased? You don't look pleased at all," she said. "I wonder if you're going to get swamped now like the others."

"Betts," he said, "you know why I'm here——"

She did not reply.

"You do, don't you?" he said. "Look Betts——" He leaned forward. "I know it's a little late to say this, but it has to be said. All my life I've thought I had to break away. Marry you—or any girl like you is the one thing I was determined never to do—it meant I was falling into the slot I was supposed to fall into——"

"I resent being judged like that," Betts said. "My family isn't my fault any more than yours is yours."

"I know that. I told you this was something that had to be said." He hesitated. "But now Betts, now we're——"

"No," she broke in. She turned to the window. "It's fr——"

## SILVER SPOON

—she addressed the window—“when you called me this noon, I knew why, of course, and I practically fell apart for joy.” She paused. “But almost right away, as I started to dress, the joy began slipping away. It’s no good, John.”

“What?” He stared at her.

She turned back to him and her eyes were unsmiling. “It’s none of my business, John. But would you mind if I asked about Grace Anders. What happened?”

“It—it was always hopeless, Betts.”

“Can’t you tell me what happened?”

“You,” was all he could say finally.

He saw the tips of her fingers move nervously across the dark bangs. She said, “I’m sorry, John. I’m not sure I can believe that.”

He groped for a way of reassuring her. All he said was: “Betts, you know me too well—you know I wouldn’t have come here unless I——”

“Yes.” She swallowed. “Oh, John——”

“Betts——” He reached for her hand. “I can’t lose this——Betts—we can’t do anything now. For the family and for Everett—we’d have to wait. But we can wait. I think it would have to be for a year at least for everyone’s sake, but——”

The softness in her eyes was still there, but he saw now how taut or resolute her chin had become. “We can’t.” She shook her head. “I can’t.”

He looked at her. “You couldn’t mean that, Betts—from the beginning when we——”

“Yes,” she broke in miserably, “from the beginning. But this isn’t the beginning, is it? That’s the awful part. It’s the end of it. It scares me to death but I’m going to stay scared——” Her voice wavered again. “Oh John—I’m sorry. We’d better leave. I shouldn’t have come.”

He reached for her hand again. “Betts——” he said, and a terrible desolateness pulled through him.

## EDWIN GILBERT

the tearoom. He left a dollar bill on the table and hurried after her. When he got to the vestibule he saw her walking rapidly, erectly, toward the street. She looked back once for an instant, the figure rain-blurred. And then she hastened past the high hedge to her car.

By Saturday afternoon there was no longer any doubt concerning Ethel. John went to his window and checked the barometer. It read thirty-one. Five minutes earlier the Weather Bureau of Boston had been on the air with the newest warning: the tropical hurricane Ethel, it was said, would strike the New York area within an hour, attended by winds of gale force, storm warnings were hoisted all along the coastline up to Eastport, Maine.

Glenway had been feeling the winds for the past several hours; the rain which had begun Thursday afternoon had now brought the Connecticut and Merrimac rivers to bank level. And here the brooks were already overflowing, the steeplechase field completely under water.

He had driven to Junior's at noon and brought Lucy back here to the house. She was staying the night. He had gone to the gardener's cottage and asked George and his family to come back with him. They were installed downstairs, and George was standing by to start the generator going as soon as power failed.

John had spent that morning at the restoration with the crew; they'd been working for the past twenty-four hours battling down Chaddford.

Betts. He glanced over at the telephone again: last night he had called her. He'd talked to one of the maids at Hawthorne, he'd talked to Betts' mother. She was out, they'd said. He knew it was untrue. He left word for her to call him.

Now, going back to the window, he saw that the barometer had fallen to thirty: the windowpanes were throbbing against the wind's rising power. He looked over at the telephone again. The call hadn't come. This morning he'd wanted to make the drive to Long Island once more, to Hawthorne if necessary,

have gone anyway, for there was altogether too much that had had to get done at Glenway and Chaddford.

He glanced at his watch. It was four-twenty. There was almost no time left. He sat down at the table and for the second time called Hawthorne.

This time Mrs. Marsh answered. The connection was poor but there was no mistaking the coolness of her tone. He asked for Betts. "I'm sorry, John. But Betts has gone over to the stables with the——"

There was a click. "No, I haven't. I'm on the extension upstairs. I was just going to call you, John."

"You were?" He strained to hear her.

"About that medieval attack of pride I had yesterday—I had to say it and I'm glad I got it off my chest——"

"What——?" he shouted above the roar, an echoing or undulating roar like sounds under water.

"Oh to heck with it—it's impossible to talk now—I'll write when I get——"

The connection broke. He sat there after hanging up, his hand still on the phone: he attempted to reconstruct what she said or was trying to say. He rose and moved around the room and he kept working to put the conversation together. He gave up finally. It was unimportant. It was her voice, he thought, and his anxiety slowly lessened. That was the change, the difference in her voice after yesterday.

It was all he had to go on. It was enough.

## 22

When he went back to the window now to study the barometer again, it had dropped to twenty-nine: the sky was sulphurous and the wind was throbbing against the panes. More than anything else he dreaded the inevitable injuries and loss of the Glenway trees.

## EDWIN GILBERT

strung between the major limbs, glad now that six weeks ago he had had George call in the tree surgeon to buttress the ancient oak's health. Far below him the Connecticut River was eddying darkly.

He left his quarters then, to go downstairs to his father's study where Kellog was waiting to work with him. Kellog, he thought now, who had been Junior's aide for the past nineteen years, was indispensable to him during this time of transition.

Midway along the wide second-floor hall, he stopped at his mother's suite. He found Lucy and Cornelia in the sitting room. John gave them the newest report on the weather and suggested that dinner be served early.

"Oh dear, do you really think so, John? You know how Hilda is. Well, all right. I'll ring her." Cornelia smiled affectionately, and returned to her work. The oncoming storm did not perturb her in the slightest.

Downstairs in the living room off the central hallway he found his father and Philip Doncourt playing chess. "Father," he paused by the table, "dinner will be early, and if you plan to have a nap——"

The old man looked up. "Yes. Thank you. Think I will." He glanced at Doncourt across from him. "No competition here whatever. I think my opponent is getting old."

Doncourt chuckled. "What's the word on the storm now, John?"

"Not very good," he said. "I expect we'll get it about half-past six or seven."

He went on to the next room, the leather-walled study where, from behind an armchair, he saw the bald scalp of Kellog. He rose. "All set, Mr. John. I don't believe this ought to take too long." He lowered his voice now, tilting his head toward the adjacent room. "Fole," he said, "was just in here. He's staying over until tomorrow. He's all packed. But Mr. Senior advised him to stay over."

John nodded. He crossed the room and seated himself at the



## SILVER SPOON

place with such ease, intent on the business at hand, that this was the first time he had ever sat at his father's table.

Ethel struck at six-twenty-five that evening. The telephone had gone dead a half-hour before, and the lights flickered and faded out. Electric power and heat in the house now came from the generator plant in the basement.

John went to the west windows of the study: Kellog's voice behind him came almost inaudibly against the roar of wind and the thudding pound of the rain. The red maples along the driveway bowed helplessly before the raging force, and limbs, split and jagged, lay strewn across the ground.

He hurried out of the room, and through the next one to the entrance hall, and up the curving staircase to the second floor. From the high east window of the hall he saw with dismay that several of the old and graceful elms had been bowled over like tenpins, their huge roots grotesquely exposed above craters in the earth. Across the smoke-yellow sky small limbs, branches, leaves, fragments of wood, shutters, shingles, glass, whipped and darted past.

He reached his mother's door, opened it and called in for Cornelia and Lucy to get downstairs. He was waiting there by the doorway as the two women started out when, above the howling cacophony of the storm, he heard the terrible other sounds.

A splintering came first, and then it became one mighty crash and the house trembled, the floor beneath his feet pulsed and shook as beyond and from overhead he heard the roof crash in, the splinter of glass and the roaring cascade of chimney bricks.

He turned, as did Cornelia and Lucy, peering down the hallway. "Horace!" Cornelia cried.

"Get downstairs, Mother," he said. "Lucy——"

Lucy started away, but his mother followed him as he ran toward his father's door, knowing at once what must have hap-

## EDWIN GILBERT

"Oh, Horace!" he heard his mother say as they entered Senior's bedroom.

John grasped her arm, holding her back. "Stay here!" he shouted to Cornelia, and advanced across the rapidly flooding floor.

Half the east wall was crushed away, boards, lath, roof beams, shingle and bricks had crashed through the ceiling: the ancient oak was partly uprooted and its nearest limbs had toppled against the roof, striking the eaves at the second floor. His father lay trapped on the four-poster bed, beneath a secondary limb which was thick as a telephone pole, trapped there in a tangle of branches and cable.

"Get George!" he called back to his mother.

He turned to the bed now, he saw with a rush of relief that his father was alive, saw him part his lips trying to speak.

He bent down, the rain drenching in over his neck and shoulders trying now in the dim light to find a safe way of extricating the old man. The rain from the open roof and wall kept slashing in, striking the old man's face, drenching his Paisley dressing robe. With his handkerchief he blotted his father's eyes and cheeks, and when he turned away to wipe his own eyes clear, he saw the figure coming through the bedroom doorway, the hurrying, massive frame of Fole.

Fole squinted around, undaunted, unhesitating, appraising the situation. "That poker!" he pointed to the long stout, black iron poker by the fireplace.

John ran over and brought it to him.

"We'll have you out of this, Mr. Senior!" Fole shouted, and the old man's eyes acknowledged him.

Moving nimbly, Fole made his way through the dense network of branches and twisted cable, the mounds of fallen bricks and plaster, to the gaping east wall. He crawled across the pooled floor, and reached for a fallen segment of thick oak. He pulled it back, and using it as a wedge, inserted the iron poker between it and the tree limb. He stopped now, craning

## SILVER SPOON

As soon as John understood what he wanted, he hurried around to the other side of the bed and grasped his father by his ankles.

Fole's broad back was stooped forward now. Slowly, very slowly, so as not to upset the delicate balance of tension that held the tree, he brought his strength upward, inching the long iron poker up in what seemed like a half-millimeter at a time.

John peered hard, waiting tensely, arrowing his attention, until he saw Fole nod, and then he pulled back, holding hard to his father's ankles, stepping back carefully until he had the old man free. He lowered the legs to the floor; stepping up quickly then and hoisting Senior by the armpits, he got him clear of the bed and dragged him across the floor and through the doorway and out beyond to the still-dry carpeted hall.

Cornelia was there, and she bent over him, slipped off the soaked Paisley robe and the torn soggy black socks. She had blankets ready and swathed him in their protective warmth.

"Horace," she began, though you couldn't hear what she said, for then the second sound or sounds reverberated around them. They came, cracking and catastrophic, in shattering succession.

John turned and started into the room again, and stopped: the remainder of the east wall was gone: in the now-gaping mouth of jagged plaster and studding, lay another section of the tree: the top segment of the heavy left Y of the main trunk.

He moved forward, wiping his eyes. Looking up, beyond to the outside, he saw what had happened: the main trunk had split at the crotch, had given way when the last cables connecting the two major limbs snapped. The balance of tension, already weakened by the ax-blows of the gale, had shifted, broken when Fole wedged up the big limb in the room.

Fole. John started forward and stopped, distracted by a beam of light coming from behind him in the now-darkening room. When he turned back he recognized George making his way in, flashlight in hand. Presently the chief gardener was alongside

## EDWIN GILBERT

they saw him and stopped again, each of them staring down. The gardener had his flashlight tilted to the bulking body which lay face down, crushed beneath the giant second limb.

John could see clearly now: the tree trunk lay a little more than midway up between Fole's shoulders and his waist. He kept watching the man's shoulders. After a while he realized there was no movement, the surface of the back was still.

He waited another moment. The gardener waved him back with the flashlight, and then he started to make his way back out of the room. His legs felt weighted and a faint dizziness seized him, then passed, and then he was in the hall. His father was no longer there. He discovered shortly that Kellog and one of George's assistants had moved the old man into Cornelia's room, and he saw Senior in her four-poster bed, still beneath blankets, his head propped up on two pillows, but there was a trace of color in his cheeks and he was speaking, giving instructions to Cornelia, Kellog, Doncourt, asking that all information about the state of damages or casualties at Glenway be obtained as soon as possible, and then he asked for Fole. "Get him in here, Doncourt," he said. "I want to see him. If it hadn't been for——"

By now John had signaled to his mother and she followed him out into the hall, and he told her.

Cornelia shut her eyes for an instant. "What can we do?" she finally said. "We can't possibly get a doctor—John, are you sure?"

"Yes," he said.

"John," Cornelia said. "We can't tell your father—not yet, Fole," she murmured.

"Mother," he said as she turned to go into the room, "would you ask Phil to come out?"

He waited there, his wet tweed coat over his arm, his buckskin shoes stained and soaked, the cuffs of his dark grey flannels clinging soggly to his ankles. When Doncourt appeared, he told him what had happened, and for a long time the dapper

## SILVER SPOON

done anything else, of course." He paused, glanced toward the door. "We can be thankful that he was up this weekend."

"Yes," John said. The queasy sensation in his stomach would not leave. He recalled trying to discourage Fole from returning to Glenway.

"Mr. Senior wants to have a long chat with me," Fole had said with a kind of harsh, pathetic pride. "And I've got a bit of unfinished business to take care of."

He saw Kellog coming out of Cornelia's room. "Mr. John," said Kellog, "your father would like to see Mr. Fole now."

John hesitated, glanced over at Doncourt.

"I think," advised Doncourt, "that the most sensible thing is to tell the old gentleman at once rather than make any false excuse which, I am afraid, he will see through only too soon."

John drew a long breath and entered the room. "Father," he said when he reached the side of the four-poster bed, "there's been an accident—that is—while Fole was working to——" He stopped before the piercing gaze of the old man.

"Accident?" said Senior at once, raising himself from the pillows.

There was no other way to go on, and John said, "The rest of the tree collapsed and Fole was caught under it. He——"

Senior's sharply inquisitive gaze widened, then blurred. "No——"

He looked over at Cornelia, who stood at the other side of the bed.

"Horace, dear," she said, "I know how you——"

The old man flung off the blankets.

"Horace!" Cornelia quickly, briskly replaced them. "You are not going to stir from that bed!"

Senior slowly, grudgingly sank back to the pillows: "Fole——" he mouthed the name, saying it almost to himself, saying it, John felt, as if he alone knew that the man's life had been given with a devotion out of all proportion to the security Senior had given in return. "Fole——" the old man now

## EDWIN GILBERT

at John, then at Cornelia and the others. Then almost vindictively he said, "Will you see now? Will you?"

In the room's hush, the diminished wind and rain came with magnified roar.

# 23

As had often happened in the past, the morning following the hurricane was innocently and benignly beautiful—like a child who, after a demonic temper tantrum, suddenly becomes winsome as a cherub, irresistible, golden, beguiling.

So it was on Sunday—the spirit of the storm was exorcised, leaving in its wake in New England an estimated two hundred men, women and children dead, said the radio.

Lower Connecticut, John heard, was more fortunate than the northern areas, though of course there was nothing fortunate about the destruction that stretched before him from his window view.

There had been no sleep. He had been with George and the men most of the night. By one in the morning when the storm's tail had passed, the Miles Oak had been winched away from the side of the house. George, imperturbable and efficient, had removed Fole's body to the lower floor, to the single room adjacent to the guest suite in the east wing.

There was no telephone service. The chauffeur, Walter, had made the trip by foot into Chaddford village and notified Dr. Barrows, the country physician, of Fole's death.

That morning John had wanted to go to the restoration to see the extent of the damage, but Senior had demanded that he first inspect the home property.

"Take a notebook, John," Senior had cautioned. "Keep careful account of the damage. You'll have to get estimates for the repair and replacement of all damaged items."

## SILVER SPOON

By ten o'clock the main Glenway road had been cleared by the ground crews, so that you could cover the distance by car. It took John nearly three hours to complete his inspection of Glenway. In the course of the tour he crammed a notebook with copious notes and diagrams, describing damage to buildings, trees, footbridges, water front, stone walls, the steeplechase field, the stables, the farm. The farm: with its herd of Guernseys and Black Angus, its stock of chickens, turkeys, ducks, its large refrigeration plant where the meats were hung, poultry and fish frozen. He went by jeep and by foot covering miles, making his notes on the conditions of fences, bridle trails, minor roads and paths, inspecting the garage apartments and cottages of the help.

At length, by midafternoon, he finished and started downhill on his way to Chaddford. He drove the jeep slowly, through the carnage of fallen hemlocks, spruce and pine.

It was a long drive and it was good to be alone. He found himself no longer grimly dwelling on the events of last night; soon he was thoroughly preoccupied in planning a program for Glenway's rehabilitation, and in the course of it he began to form other plans.

There were other aspects of Glenway that would have to be changed, he thought now. The strip of shore at the north end of the property could easily be put at the disposal of the help, the domestic staffs, and gardeners and the farm manager whose families needed and would welcome some retreat of their own. There was no reason why this couldn't be set up so that they could use it by next summer. . . .

He began for the first time to give serious thought to a house and property for his own ultimate use. He'd been reminded on the tour today of the many old dwellings which stood empty and in disrepair in isolated sections. Someday, he reflected, the big main house would be empty, but he would not want to live there. There was another place, about two miles northeast of Junior's property, where Second Hill Brook ran and widened

## EDWIN GILBERT

and inwardly he smiled at the extravagant turn his mind was taking. It occurred to him now that the stewardship of Glenway would not necessarily be a fearful burden; on the contrary, he thought, the prospect could hold infinite pleasures and rewards.

When he reached the lower threshold he brought the jeep to a halt: one of the watchmen, Clyde Jameson, was standing near the right gatepost waiting, and he knew he would be expected to tell him about Leonard Fole. He went through all of it once more. Clyde, an employee for over twenty years, had been hired by Fole. He seemed more dutifully polite than regretful about Fole's death.

"Mr. John," Clyde said presently, "how soon we going to have that gatepost rebuilt? Took a beating all right, didn't it?"

John nodded, stepped from the jeep to have a look at the left gatepost—or what was left of it. It had collapsed beneath one of the huge, toppled hemlocks.

"Spoils the whole entrance." Clyde stood there, black cap, examining the ruins. "I was talking with Frank Purtell and he said maybe there was some old stone in Chaddford could match it."

"Yes——" But he kept studying the destroyed gatepost, and he found himself reluctant to plan its repair.

"What do you think, sir?" Clyde asked.

"What?" he said absently, and moved back to look at the other gatepost, still erect, still handsome in its anachronistic splendor. Then he said, "I don't think we'll bother with this, Clyde. There's no point building it up again. We're going to get rid of the gateposts altogether. They don't belong at Glenway," John said quietly. "Not any more."



# The Innocent Ambassadors

PHILIP WYLIE

Received from  
READER'S SERVICE  
Presb. Board of Foreign Missions



AN ABRIDGEMENT

## The Author

The son of a Congregational minister and an authoress of popular fiction, PHILIP WYLIE was born in 1902 in North Beverly, Mass. His parents encouraged his keen interest in the world about him, his vivid imagination and his ready wit. As a writer he is probably best known for his "Generation of Vipers," a sharp invective against the sin and moral desuetude of the times, but he began his professional writing career at the age of 12 when he received one dollar for a poem appearing in a religious periodical. Since then he has written hundreds of short stories and essays as well as over 25 published books.

# introduction

In a writer whose principal public is literate youth, one whose favorite sports involve strenuous outdoor activities such as skin-diving, the news that his daughter expects a child produces a dramatic effect. The author wants to see the grandchild at the earliest possible moment; his reaction, in short, is like that of anybody else. But this first grandchild was to be born in Hawaii. And I, who once had relished travel, lived abroad, had finally gone too far. Afterward, and for twenty years, I had so deep a fear of journeying far from home that Bermuda was my limit.

The grandchild, however, outweighed the phobia. With my wife, Frederica Ballard Wylie (who had no hesitation in the matter), I reserved passage by air to Honolulu. A modest plan that was destined to become a flight around the world!

Some days after I nervously committed myself, my wife (whom we call "Ricky") put forward the idea that since we would fly to Hawaii we "might as well" go on to Tokyo and Hong Kong—two places I had not expected to see in this life. The mere idea made me panicky and I hoped she'd forget it. But she and I dined, soon after that, with our close and long-time friends, Helen and Michael Lerner, who have hunted, fished, led scientific expeditions and traveled for its own sake in every quarter of the earth. They not only backed Ricky's wistful suggestion but pointed out, over coffee, that Hong Kong was halfway around the world from Miami, Florida, where we live. Why not, they asked, go there—and just keep going?

I put up a frightened defense:

It would take too much time. It would cost more than we could afford. I would not risk visiting areas that might be taken over by the Reds. And so on. Futile: You could see the Ginza, the Emerald Buddha and the Taj Mahal already shining in

## The Author

The son of a Congregational minister and an authoress of popular fiction, PHILIP WYLIE was born in 1902 in North Beverly, Mass. His parents encouraged his keen interest in the world about him, his vivid imagination and his ready wit. As a writer he is probably best known for his "Generation of Vipers," a sharp invective against the sin and moral desuetude of the times, but he began his professional writing career at the age of 12 when he received one dollar for a poem appearing in a religious periodical. Since then he has written hundreds of short stories and essays as well as over 25 published books.

# introduction

In a writer whose principal public is literate youth, one whose favorite sports involve strenuous outdoor activities such as skin-diving, the news that his daughter expects a child produces a dramatic effect. The author wants to see the grandchild at the earliest possible moment; his reaction, in short, is like that of anybody else. But this first grandchild was to be born in Hawaii. And I, who once had relished travel, lived abroad, had finally gone too far. Afterward, and for twenty years, I had so deep a fear of journeying far from home that Bermuda was my limit.

The grandchild, however, outweighed the phobia. With my wife, Frederica Ballard Wylie (who had no hesitation in the matter), I reserved passage by air to Honolulu. A modest plan that was destined to become a flight around the world!

Some days after I nervously committed myself, my wife (whom we call "Ricky") put forward the idea that since we would fly to Hawaii we "might as well" go on to Tokyo and Hong Kong—two places I had not expected to see in this life. The mere idea made me panicky and I hoped she'd forget it. But she and I dined, soon after that, with our close and long-time friends, Helen and Michael Lerner, who have hunted, fished, led scientific expeditions and traveled for its own sake in every quarter of the earth. They not only backed Ricky's wistful suggestion but pointed out, over coffee, that Hong Kong was halfway around the world from Miami, Florida, where we live. Why not, they asked, go there—and just keep going?

I put up a frightened defense:

It would take too much time. It would cost more than we could afford. I would not risk visiting areas that might be taken over by the Reds. And so on. Futile; You could see the Ginza, the Emerald Buddha and the Taj Mahal already shining in

## PHILIP WYLIE

We left Miami on the last day of January, 1956. We flew around the globe. We spent a little less than three months—and considerably more than twenty thousand dollars. We were in the air a hundred and three hours. The cost of transportation (first class wherever possible) was about a sixth of the total. Flying is fast and reasonable. But to the time it takes must be added time taken by frequent delays and by long drives to and from airports. We were *air-borne* for about four days; we must have spent six more en route to and from terminals—or hanging around in them waiting. . . .

If vacation means rest, we had no vacation.

We never worked so hard in a comparable period, or saw as many people. We never slept less; never talked more or listened.

Nearly all the world we saw was new to us. Nearly all differed from preconceptions I'd formed; books, motion pictures, lectures and TV programs had failed to convey the right clues for me. That was not a surprise. Prior to 1936 (when grim travel experiences set up my travel phobia), I found I did not see anything as most others see it. One of my reasons for writing this book, the minor one of two, is to enter my dissent and assent where it deviates from general opinion.

The other, major reason is more important:

All the world not yet Communist is engaged in a desperate struggle against being made Communist either by evangelism or by every amoral and inhumane method available to convinced, determined agents of one billion people. But the overwhelming majority of Americans cannot at present even understand this ghastly engagement, since not one in a hundred of us can even define "Communism" acceptably!

To think Communism is just a "conspiracy" is to confuse the whole with but one of its means. To think that its most dangerous aspect is "atheism"—or to imagine Communism can be effectively opposed by Christianity—is not to understand it at all. For Communism is, essentially, also a *belief*, a religion

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

by an Inquisition brought up to date and used on a world-wide scale.

Communism, acting on the theory of permanent military stalemate, is proceeding to dismember the world. But American statesmen still appear to assume that war may be risked, even that an "all-out" war can be won, by the "free peoples." The Communists have no intention of committing suicide to achieve our ruin, I am sure. If they seem to threaten holocaust, it will not be calculated risk but calculating bluff. Their target is the intellect of every living person; where people cannot be persuaded, the target becomes the heart, nerves, sanity and the body of each of us. Against such endeavor, no "Eisenhower Doctrine," no guarantee of borders, no economic aid, no such "information" as we now dispense overseas—and not the possession of shattering atomic power—is of any final avail.

So I have here tried to tell what Communism is and what it is doing. For I am sure the fate of America itself hinges on a reversal of the Red world mission by *Americans*—who do not yet know what it is that must be annihilated. The so-called cold war is not what we think it. The striving of great military powers is not involved. In the Red mind, such "power" is now self-effacing . . . obsolete. What the cold war concerns is *human belief*; primarily *your belief*!

You can read this as a travel narrative, for it is that. Some who have seen it in typescript say it reads "like a novel." But this is not fiction: it happened. An astounding trip—a journey that informed and appalled me; even in the areas where I thought myself both better informed and more appalled than most of my fellow Americans. I would not have missed the experience for anything I possess. Yet I cannot say, with many tourists, that its main effect was to make me glad I live in USA.

Its main effect was to make me wonder how much time was left to save USA from a cannibalizing Faith of Fiends. So, when I'm asked if we "had a good time," I answer within myself:

# Oahu, Kauai, and points west or east

All good Americans ought to go to Hawaii before they die. They should go as long before they die as possible—a proposition which holds for most American travelers, everywhere. For the great majority of our long-distance tourists are at least sixty years old, men who have retired from business (more rarely, the professions), accompanied by their wives.

People sixty years old are usually rigid in their opinions. They have countless biases both obsolete and fixed. Americans with money, moreover, have too often spent their lives in the pursuit of that one possession. They have not had the time (or, at least, they have not *taken* the time) to learn anything, much, excepting (in the case of the men) wheat futures, the structure and assembly of steam shovels, or the techniques of selling and also foisting Buicks. Their wives, as limited, have devoted themselves to Society and Things. Such people are not just uninformed; they do not know information exists.

These people represent one kind of American success. But they do not represent America. They do not represent the knowledge in America, the understanding, the capacity for brotherhood, the willingness to learn, the widespread ability to evaluate truly or the common wish to appreciate correctly. Those are endowments of millions of educated or decently bred Americans who are mostly younger than the tourists and nearly always so much less concerned with money that they are unable to afford travel as mere sport even if they could think of



## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

opportunity to visit Hawaii, the chance to get to know some interesting fellow citizens.

For Hawaiians are, of course, Americans. They are among the handsomest, happiest and pleasantest members of the human species; they are, also, among the most racially mixed.

The full-blooded Hawaiian is rare though Hawaiians are sometimes pure Americans like you and me. That is to say, they are Nordic and white—a mixture of no more than a dozen major bloods in which the Asian and the Negro have become recessive through generations our ancestors spent in the British Isles, Scandinavia, or other parts of Europe. Hawaiians, in short, are as mixed as our own ancestors used to be. The original island people mingled with Chinese and Japanese, with Portuguese and Spaniards, with unknown myriads of sailors from Britain, Sweden and Norway, Holland, France and the United States.

Hawaiians are, also many thousands of “unmixed” (or not yet mixed) Japanese and Chinese. They include some Negroes—mixed and not.

They have no color line. Segregation in Hawaii would be as impossible to practice as is genuine segregation in the United States. For not one white person can know how close he or she may be to a Negro or an American Indian, a Chinese or a Jew. To know, a person would have to possess a guaranteed pedigree of parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, back through generations, in a world where it is “a wise child that knows his own father”—a world where only two or three ancestral lines may be traced back any distance by anybody and not one solitary ancestor even in such a pedigree can be guaranteed! It would be a great lesson to people of integrity who yet imagine there is value in what they call racial purity to spend a year or two in Hawaii.

To observe the people in the Islands accurately is to see that to imagine the white race unique and superior is nonsense, and to begin to see that, nowadays, the concept is *suicidal* non-

## PHILIP WYLIE

honest person, and even rather painlessly, since the fantastic religious bigotry that most of us do not know we have is not ubiquitously and grievously aroused. To be sure, Hawaii has Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. But Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist and other Protestant churches—along with Mormon temples, Roman Catholic Cathedrals, Synagogues and Reading Rooms of Christian Science—predominate.

The neon signs are in English and if they include Hawaiian words or names their letters, at least, will be decipherable. The same drugstores stuffed with the same glittering products stand on similar corners. If some of the school kids have slanting eyes and black pigtailed, they will still order ice cream cones and hamburgers in good Americanese. Indeed, to any of the millions of citizens of USA who are familiar with South Florida, Hawaii will seem like that part of home—with mountains added; and a large proportion of locals will talk and act (but not necessarily look!) exactly like the main street crowds in Miami Beach.

The islands are among the best examples of natural beauty the planet displays. Precipitous mountains rise above jade valleys, mountains jungle-covered save where eroded knife-edges point into the prevailing winds or stark Cliffs glare at the Pacific. Clouds are impaled continually by the highest ridges. All around, the near sea runs in parallel white crests and its distant reaches are tourmaline blue. Coconut palms overhang beige beaches; these rim the inside curves of innumerable coves; and in such secretive places, the water is usually emerald. Headland escarpments of dark volcanic rock pound back breakers in a roaring war whereof the issue is foam.

The islands are never cold, usually warm, never very hot—and it rains a great deal, especially in wintertime. But it does not rain for long, as a rule. An hour's wait will salvage almost any Baptist picnic or Polynesian luau.

We had counted, Ricky and I, on two weeks of rest at Waikiki before commencing the strenuous part of our journey—

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

There wasn't any to be had in Hawaii—for us.

The principal reason was that here, for the first time, we undertook the grandparental function. Our daughter, Karen, had written us long since about settling in Oahu, which is the island of Honolulu, Pearl Harbor, and Waikiki Beach. She and her husband had bought a small house and a considerable amount of land on its windward side—a term without significance to us until we crossed the insular divide.

Karen and "Tap" had met at Cornell and married in a church not far from our house in South Florida. Our son-in-law had trained for the Marine Corps Reserve in college. He'd gone to boot camp in summers, finished at Parris Island and received his commission before he had wed Karen. They went, the day after their marriage, to Pensacola and flight training and thence to California from where they'd been almost immediately transferred to Hawaii.

Now, they had a byside home—and a newborn son.

From our hotel at Waikiki to the house on Kaneohe Bay was a drive of about thirty miles through spectacular country. The road climbed by cliff-hanging switchbacks over something called Pali Pass—a road only two cars wide, often smothered in foglike cloud, usually glittering with slick moisture and sometimes deluged by one of the brief, beautiful cascades that form in Hawaii's mountains during heavy rain.

That drive across Oahu, which we made nearly every day, and the return, which we generally made in the dark, was sometimes arduous enough for a day's work. Many Hawaiians think of it as suitable only for annual pilgrimage, which didn't surprise us; what did, was the number of daily commuters.

On the windward side of the island, we had to pitch in and work. Ricky, especially, labored at women's tasks. There was, however, the consummate reward of our grandson, as well as his mother—and his father, come dinnertime. People who have never been grandparents will not comprehend our rapture—and

## PHILIP WYLIE

Besides our regular drives to the windward side of Oahu, besides our almost daily acts of applied grandparenthood, we made one further visit.

I have a brother-in-law who is the owner of a prodigious business which he started on the mere metal tip of a shoestring. His enterprise covers most of USA and in administering it he has made "contacts" with many people of many sorts, among whom many are important. Through John's connections, we had an introduction to one of the Admirals at Pearl Harbor and owed him a call, since he had made the arrangements for us at our Waikiki hotel.

We duly dispatched a note to the Admiral and we were invited to tour Pearl Harbor.

This we did, one sunny afternoon. . . . We cruised on a Navy small boat and looked at the rusting iron of battleships taken by treacherous surprise. We gazed landward while the sailor explained over which mountains which flights of Japanese dive bombers, torpedo planes and fighters came, and at what times and intervals. We started seaward to note the path this great battlewagon had taken in attempted escape—and where it failed. We surveyed a stripped-decked vessel that had been furiously bombed in the mistaken notion it was a carrier. And we were shown where the miniature submarines had come into the harbor.

Finally, we boarded that small portion of the *Arizona* which still stands above the tide, trod her buckled plates and followed the long, dim line of her beneath the water that is still coffin for hundreds of American sailors and officers. We read the bronze plaque that an Admiral put on the wreck at his own expense when a stingy Congress would not mark the grisly memorial. And we looked at the American flag that flies in the blue, Hawaiian air above the *Arizona*.

I felt a tremendous anger. I guess our Navy guide, who saw and survived that morning, felt the same emotion, and more strongly; his face hardened and his throat went dry when he

# Tokyo

Like everyone on board, we were a little stunned by the long flight from Hawaii and Wake Island. Planes, even more than transcontinental trains, set one down with a specific disorientation and a particular debility. I cannot say whether those symptoms are occasioned by the motor noise or the peculiar confinement of a plane which obliges one to sit in the space of a big barrel almost continually for the whole of a day or night. They may even come from some unconscious stress owing to travel through a medium for which man is not prepared by evolution.

The very advantage of the plane, that it takes you appalling distances in brief intervals, may cause the aftermath of haunted slight depression. Rape of time and devastation of distance leaves most older people with some such morbid process though the young do not seem to suffer.

The door of the plane opened; a voice called, "Will Mr. and Mrs. Wylie please get off first?"

We looked at each other in astonishment: nothing explained this sudden priority.

It was cold outdoors—about forty degrees.

We reached the landing on the wheeled steps. Below, in a scattered group, were a dozen men aiming newspaper cameras. Flash bulbs commenced to wink dazzlingly. It was the sort of thing I'd seen happen to other people. Ricky and I had been photographed by one newspaper man at a time, occasionally two. But never a press corps.

Somebody took my handbag. A hand seized mine.

"George Smith," said a beaming, husky young man. "I'm in public relations here, for the air line. Hi!"

I shook hands with George and introduced Ricky. "Did you

## PHILIP WYLIE

George chuckled. "They look at the passenger lists. I showed 'em one of your books that I like, myself. Impressive number of other books listed in the forematter. 'Great American author arriving,' I said.

"I've got my car outside. Take you to the hotel. Follow me. Do what I gesture. Don't talk at all. If talking's necessary—I'll do it."

We felt grateful to George. We did, that is, till he said to the reporters, "Now, boys. The Wylies are bushed. They'll be at the Imperial. If you want long interviews—call me and I'll arrange it." He turned cheerily to me. "Or will I?"

"My God! What can I contribute to the *Tokyo Telegram and Bugle*?"

He said, "You're a famous man. I arranged it. Contribute fame."

In the web of a dingy afternoon we drove toward Tokyo, George laboring through hectic traffic. The street was cobblestoned, the ride rough. People were walking and pedaling bicycles, people with burdens on their backs and heads; bikes, cars, wagons and many tricycle trucks banged along. We passed through a factory area and another with many shops, into the windows of which Ricky and I peered. Through these purlieus tramped women in bright-colored kimonos dulled by the dull day and men in dark kimonos, people with no hats, people wearing a straw "coolie" sort, and others with a huge sombrero that seemed to be woven of raffia. Kids in rags. Men and women in Western dress, in work clothes, in every combination of two worlds' styles. All their clothes looked worn and grimy: these truck drivers, cyclists and the rest were working Japanese. People with black hair and "slanted" eyes.

But the general effect was that of the outskirts of our own cities on a wintry day. Only a portion of the architecture and only an occasional shop selling temple offerings, odd viands, or a rainbow-bright selection of artificial flowers seemed strange to me when I did not take into close account the Oriental part of

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

We began to pass buildings that looked like private mansions. They were made of brick and of wood. Some were enclosed by woven bamboo fences. Several had small yards and winter-browned formal gardens where, in summer, there would be brooklets and blossoms. Miniature wooden bridges arched over the now-drained watercourses. The grim environs had deposited soot upon those modern-looking houses so that even their gardens, like the people in bright garments, were overlaid with grubbiness made even grubbier by the weather. All around the ornate, incongruent structures stretched slums.

"What are those?" Ricky asked.

"Some of the fanciest geisha houses in Tokyo," George said. . . .

Differing buildings piled up around us after that—stores, dwellings fenced from the street, warehouses and wholesale markets. Trade names and shop signs had been painted, in the manufacturing area; now, their equivalents began to glow with light. We soon saw a shopping street, with department stores, and sidewalks crowded to the curbs by hurrying people. An electric train roared over an elevated track. Neon, argon, sodium, mercury vapor spangled the Tokyo sky with Japanese characters. But even then—though fascinated, bemused—I could not find much sensation of the bizarre. We might almost have been entering Chicago, Philadelphia or Cleveland.

And at last we reached Frank Lloyd Wright's earthquake-proof Imperial Hotel.

I'd read a good deal—as who has not?—about that engineering masterpiece: a modern hotel built on foundations sunk in Tokyo's mud, contrived so that during quakes the edifice stands still while its underpinnings slide. Somehow, I'd envisaged the Imperial as a Statlerlike skyscraper. But it is low and as rambling as a boxwood maze and made of brick, ornamented with a volcanic stone heavily—almost monstrously—carved. Smog has darkened the yellowish brick; time and Tokyo's quakes have chipped the sculpture.

## PHILIP WYLIE

soaker—a tub with piping as complex as the snakes around old Laocoön.

George invited us to dinner that night with his wife and son in a “tempura place”—whatever that might mean. . . .

It meant one of those restaurants with a lantern at the door. A pretty, interior “patio” with paving, pebbles and stunted trees. Beyond, rooms with wooden counters and wondrous smells.

We were conducted to a counter and seated in a row, on stools. There were no other white people in the restaurant. Facing us stood a chef. Laid out in neat rows beside him was almost every type of raw sea food one could name.

Bowls were put in front of us by the bowing waitresses.

On George’s instructions, we put soy sauce and grated radish in our bowls. The chef held up—on chopsticks—one morsel of seafood after another. George nodded, after questioning us, our serial acceptance of lobster, shrimp, smelts, strips of larger fish, squid, octopus, crab fragments, mussels and eel.

Ricky and I stirred together the soy sauce and ground radish, emulating the Smiths. We used chopsticks. Knives and forks were not part of the restaurant equipment.

On little plates covered with paper, deep-fried bits of seafood were set out by the chef. We’d each be served a mouthful or two of lobster. Then a shrimp apiece, or two. Then a strip of squid. These were dipped in the sauce and eaten, very hot. And all were delicious.

We went home that night through the Ginza, which is a district, though there’s a Ginza Street, too. It swarmed with humanity. Signs on the fantastic-topped stores and theaters were beautiful, as are all electric signs when you cannot read them. Our stomachs were full of good food; our heads, with oddments of new information of which some did seem fairly peculiar.

The oddest was the fact that, until our armies occupied Japan, even Tokyo had virtually no street names. The army put up signs and gave certain thoroughfares lettered names. But even today, nobody “knows” Tokyo. Only districts are named



## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

and while maps are to be had they chart a wordless, numberless labyrinth. If you take a cab in Tokyo, you generally have to be able not only to speak Japanese but to direct your driver precisely to the address you wish to reach. A cabdriver may be picked up a mile from it—and not know where your hotel is! Not even the Imperial Hotel, I discovered—and not even if you'd learned to pronounce it: "Tai-koku."

I still do not understand that! The average Japanese city dweller must know mere trails through his metropolis: the way to get to work, the route to his friends' homes, the road to shops and markets and a few other byways essential to his living. The rest of the city is evidently wilderness, as is pathless jungle to wild animals.

We slept well. The morning was blue and sunny; the sky, as we opened the French windows of our spacious room, polka-dotted by colored advertising balloons that rode above the fanciful tops of Tokyo's big buildings. Here and there were tall towers. I assumed they were left over from the war: emplacements for antiaircraft guns. But that was wrong; they were for fire watching.

Tokyo is, largely a wooden city with paper walls and windows—fragile, save where it is modernized and westernized. Some eight million persons live there, in the crowded squalor of poverty and the still-crowded splendor of riches. The bamboo, rice paper and teak houses burn quickly, even when not purposely set afire by napalm. Comparatively few citizens have telephones. So the towers serve for fire spotting just as similar towers in America are used to spot "smokes" in forests.

Ricky and I dressed, had an American breakfast in our room and went forth to see. The guidebooks said that just walking anywhere in Japan was itself an adventure. In that, they understated; we spent a day and an evening Tokyo-gazing, agog as any tourist.

## PHILIP WYLIE

Japanese are not rigidly locked in life stations, like Hindus owing to their caste system, prewar Japan was feudal. No ready path existed by which even an accomplished individual could rise. But Mr. Io had made a beginning before the war; and afterward, he achieved thoroughgoing success. His progress stemmed partly from the fact that he had learned good English as a boy. Early in our occupation he noted various products which our troops employed and the Japanese admired. He set up, at first in a small way, to manufacture copies for domestic use. That enterprise led to the ownership of several factories and dominion over numerous home industries.

Mr. Io had also made the reverse observation: certain Japanese goods and gadgets unfamiliar to American soldiers were much appreciated by them. Again, he profited.

Ricky and I met him in his offices because he was a friend of a Mrs. Cane—an American woman to whom we had a letter. Mr. Io liked to entertain visiting Americans, she said. His office was like that of an American executive. Probably he had copied the business quarters of a customer in the United States. His secretary and clerks spoke English almost as well as he.

We had a cup of tea. Then, with Mrs. Cane and Mr. Io's secretary, a Miss (I think) Gamoshishi (whom we were told to call "Lu"), we were escorted to Mr. Io's limousine (a Cadillac) and taken on a tour of the city.

Mr. Io and I sat with the driver, in front.

He was a tall man—considerably taller than I: perhaps six feet two. He had an austere face with a square chin and a long, somewhat thin nose. His eyelids bore the fold of tissue that gives an impression of slant; but his eyes were as wide and open as a Westerner's and not quite as brown as mine. He was lean and hard; it showed in the smooth way he walked.

"Lu," as tall as Ricky, which is fairly tall, was flower-pretty. She helped to answer our queries—and subsequently, on loan from our host, became our part-time social secretary.

Mr. Io was not a typical Japanese. But since our relations

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

connotation of "typical," where it refers to foreigners. There are many tall Japanese, for example. Many do not have the slightly compressed noses associated with Orientals. Not a few have eyes that slant less than the eyes of certain American models, in great demand by fashion photographers. Moreover, Mr. Io was certainly not yellow in color.

How, and why, white people came to call others red and yellow I can comprehend—but not condone. "Yellow" races are not yellow at all, as any American could see in any Chinatown. Most of them merely have, in their skins, more of a pigment called melanin than most of us. But they are sometimes whiter than many sallow Americans; and they are seldom as dark as the average sun-tanned lifeguard.

By the time we reached a certain market street which Mr. Io wanted us to visit, he and I were well acquainted.

He ordered the car parked. We walked down a wide, cement-paved "street" where traffic was forbidden and people streamed between two rows of gaudy shops. Ricky said, "It makes me think of something at home." I guessed: a carnival midway. She answered that I was right—and noticed some hand-carved tortoise shell in a window. She investigated with Mrs. Cane and Lu.

"Not far from here," Mr. Io said to me, "is a very beautiful Shinto shrine. Would you like to see it?"

I went into a shop where Ricky already had two bowing women busy with tortoise shell adornments and said we were going on to the shrine.

A long flight of steps led up to an immense, pagoda-roofed structure. Its roof was scarlet, the frieze beneath, gold. We climbed the steps slowly. I looked back at the midway—a pageant of men and women in kimonos and a medley of voices, tempo set by the geta-sound which is like the rattle of bamboos in wind. Mr. Io led the way amongst people milling in the shrine.

He had fallen silent. Under the ornate roof at what corre-

## PHILIP WYLIE

Mr. Io scowled a little and moved to a group of golden symbols inside a red-roped square. Above them, folded paper hung over a central image. Whether the image was gold, or gilded, I do not know. It was a sculptural abstraction that resembled an Alexander Calder stabile. Mr. Io bowed again.

And I did.

Now, his discomfiture was plain: he thought my emulation a mockery. Nevertheless, he went solemnly to the place for contributions, took out a pocketbook and tossed a folded yen-note amongst the heaped offering which consisted mainly of coins.

So I took out my bill clip and I, too, added a paper bill.

Like Mr. Io, I bowed again and backed away.

He strode angrily to the head of the colossal staircase and waited, iron-faced.

I said, "I hope you don't mind that I, also, made your ancestors an honoring bow? They must have been fine people."

His face relaxed slightly. "Of course I did not mind."

"Or added my small offering? After all—there is, in your religion—the great principle I believe."

"You know anything about my religion?"

"Something," I said. "Wait a minute." I thought and then quoted: "There exists no highest deity beyond that in the human mind."

His eyes searched mine. "How do you—an American—quote Shinto-Denji?"

"A man," I said, "is born, first. Next, he asks, *Who am I?* From that, he must soon ask, *Who is God?* His parents—that is to say, his ancestors—will have given him one, particular answer. But if he is man enough, he will look as best he is able at *all* the answers of *all* men. And he will look within himself, also, for answers that may be there."

My arm was seized by fingers like wrenches. "Do you believe in God?"

"I believe I am *part* of God."

"So do I!" His voice was almost exultant. "It is the same!

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

"Then we agree. And that is why . . ." I looked back at the golden mandala on the altar to finish my statement.

"My friend," the Japanese whispered, "I thank you."

He bowed at the icons again—and then at *me*.

So I bowed to him.

We walked quite a distance before either of us said anything more. Then, as if he were weary, he leaned on a fence made of peeled logs and looked toward a grove of winter-bare trees. Beyond, was a covered street and sprawling bazaar, where Japanese were sitting, cross-legged selling at auction bright-dyed everlasting flowers, ball-point pens, fans, beads, candy, cakes, neckties, geta, Western footgear.

Mr. Io began to talk, quietly. "It is attractive here. The people shopping—and just enjoying the sunshine—in so pleasant a place! These new stalls and the gay things people can buy. The bazaar—and the pretty covered street. Yes. Attractive!"

"So many things in Japan are attractive that, in my country, wouldn't be. They'd be utilitarian, perhaps, and clean. But nobody would plant that tree there—and nobody would make a little garden in such a spot as—" I gestured.

"You burned it," he said flatly, coldly.

"The war?"

His strong arm swept the colorful district. "You cannot possibly imagine! My shrine—that gorgeous, peaceful place—is all new. It was burned to the ground! This market—the bazaar—the flower market—homes—everything! And there were only narrow streets leading out. So most of the people who were here burned with this area. To death. Fire poured from the sky. Tokyo shook with bombs from 'Mr. B.' and smelled like a forgotten frying pan. Smoke and burnt people. *You did that!*"

"I know." I looked up at the sky. "Quite a few young men I was friendly with were also killed here—by you. They flew those B29's. They doubtless fell—some of them—right here—in their planes that *you* set afire."

## PHILIP WYLIE

I knew what was happening within him.

By showing respect for his religion and by revealing I understood what I respected, I had made him happy in a new-found way. So, now, he was emboldened to test on me another agony that under ordinary circumstances he might not have acknowledged in a lifetime's acquaintanceship. My insight had given him a pleasure he could not entirely trust, hence could not bear: surely, you Americans are not capable of complete sympathy? That doubt had caused this attempt to raise a doubt—and pain—in me: to anger me, as a further probe.

So I replied, speaking as flatly as he, "About ten days ago, Mr. Io, I was standing on a small area of buckled steel that barely rose above high tide. It had been put there by Japanese bombers, on the bottom of Pearl Harbor, without warning and while your statesmen in Washington were pledging peace. That steel was the top of a coffin under which a lot of our sailors lie. Near it were the sunken wrecks of other ships. I don't like war. I think it shows, not that we are still primitive—that's too easy. I think war shows we are somewhat insane; for we could be men now, not beasts. We could have and know Selves. But we Americans have 'face' too. We are generous—more so than anybody, I believe." I looked straight at him. "You shouldn't have sunk the *Arizona* that way, Mr. Io—or all those other ships. When you mention the horror here—the dead, the frenzy—and tell me how you remade it all so beautifully—you should also tell yourselves about the crime that got your sky full of Americans. You made the mistake of angering America."

He didn't answer at all.

By and by I looked at him. He was crying.

Japanese do not weep easily.

But I do not believe that they are "inscrutable," either—that their emotions invariably turn their faces to blank bronze. I think, instead, that they have a useful way of hiding feeling when they are sure—or even when they fear—that what they feel will not be understood. "Oriental impassivity," I think is

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

Many Americans laugh off all such distress, as if they were empty within, idle-minded, trivial, unhurttable or stupid. Englishmen outstare the discomfitor, eyes glacial, lips stiff. Latins rage aloud and in public, blowing off the hurt in what seems uncontrolled emotion and is but ritual.

One process, only, underlies those varied responses.

After a while, rather gingerly, he took my arm. "Let us find the ladies," he said.

On our second morning in Japan the reporters who had met us at the airport, and some who gate-crashed, began to phone for appointments. I'd already protested that a first-time visitor would have nothing to say; but there is one advantage in being interviewed which most people miss: *you* can interview the reporters.

Obviously, every reporter I saw in Japan or elsewhere, knew immeasurably more about each nation than I. My appointments therefore served to gain information.

From reporters, I learned a number of things—and also obtained numerous opinions which I was able to verify to some extent by putting the same questions directly to many sorts of Japanese, or by giving them an opening in which to discuss the subjects.

In such a fashion, for instance, I was able to learn the psychological means the Japanese employed to salvage what they could of the "face" lost through military defeat. The means were two:

The first was the familiar use of a whipping boy or scapegoat.

We tried and punished many Japanese military men and political leaders for war crimes. Most Japanese have assented to that, believing they were led into catastrophe by a handful of evil (or stupid and overgrasping) leaders. Since, as a nation, they were more used to domination than many other peoples, that reaction is not unfounded: a feudal society professing a

## PHILIP WYLIE

plainly immoral commands. Currently, the Japanese are not brass-crazed. . . .

One night in the lobby of the Imperial Hotel, Ricky and I met the Japanese Admiral who planned and commanded the attack on Leyte Gulf that very nearly wrecked our invasion of the Philippines. In the last possible moment, it became a rout for Japan which ended her big ship threat.

I was aware that every Japanese in the lobby recognized their Admiral. But nobody bowed to him, nobody looked awed. When he departed half a hundred cold faces watched him go out into the cold night to summon a cab.

If the Japanese Admiral had been tried for war crimes, he had been released or served a sentence. But what was important to his fellow citizens seemed to be that he was among those who had led Japan to downfall. I would not say he was held in hatred. But the Japanese showed toward him the rudeness of overt nonrecognition. That attitude must have been deeply felt, for there was no reason, any longer, to feign because Americans were present.

The second and even more potent way of saving "face" among the Japanese is—the atomic bomb.

When it is mentioned in the Tokyo press—which is often—the two words are often accompanied by some such clause as ". . . which brought Japan to her knees."

The bomb is accorded by all Japan a power akin to legendary instruments—Thor's hammer, David's slingshot, Arthur's Excalibur. For who can resist that which is magically irresistible? No one—not even the Japanese! A beaten nation never had a better out, and the hue and cry raised in Japan today over radioactive tuna, the radiation sickness of the crew of the *Lucky Dragon* and the fall-out from subsequent experiments, reflects in part an unconscious will to sustain the idea that the war was lost owing to magic. That Japan was a defeated nation when the bombs were used is not generally acknowledged by the Japanese. Our own military men did not acknowledge it at the time either, although they were the ones who had the most direct knowledge of the situation.



## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

They were planning to invade the main islands and had prepared, I've heard on excellent authority, for a million American casualties. They were contemplating, the same authorities tell me, a possible second million. They were not of a mind to wait for naval victories, blockade, the destruction of Japanese shipping and the continuing ruination of cities by the B29's, to bring down the enemy. But even those Japanese who could, or do, know the condition of their country on August 6, 1945, and know we were ready to invade, believe that only the A-bomb made further fighting futile.

They expected to fight back house by house and think of themselves, not as defeated in fair battle, but hexed. Japan to the Japanese is Loki, who was given a wrestling partner over whom he could not prevail though he had outwrestled all others; the Norse god finally learned his opponent's identity: Death. Who can beat death, then? Who can beat atomic bombs? Japanese see themselves as almost superhuman—but even supermen fail where the magic forces of legend are exerted. So they react with inordinate vehemence and fear to our Pacific bomb tests, keeping alive *their own myth*.

It is a circumstance the Communists neatly exploit. Japanese response to Soviet tests (which produce similar fall-out on the main islands) is not violent—evidence that the selective Communist tactic is effective. Japanese fear was naturally oriented toward the only users of atomic weapons in history, ourselves. Both propaganda and fact combine. For the Japanese know that America started atomic bomb warfare, so it is easy to persuade many (as the Reds do) that Soviet atomic tests are wholly defensive in nature.

America currently has no effective means to combat the Red strategy. We do not point in behalf of freedom, or of the self-determination of peoples, or of the UN, to the Red's history of aggression when Japan suffers Soviet fall-out. We do not make clear our motives in continuing the bomb tests. We do not talk effectively, as America, to Japan.

## PHILIP WYLIE

propaganda that could readily be exposed—characterizes America everywhere. It is one of the main reasons we are losing the cold war. . . .

Shortly after our arrival Ricky and I were invited to dine with four gentlemen of Japan. One was a professor of ichthyology to whom I had a letter from mutual friends in Manhattan. Another was a retired government official who had served as the Tokyo representative of the Interational Game Fish Association. A third was a gentleman who'd spent much time in consular service abroad, including many years in America. A fourth was a tall, imposing man with a fabulous sense of humor whose name and profession I did not catch.

We were invited by the retired official (through the ever-gracious Lu) to a tempura restaurant for dinner. We were escorted there by the professor who had (for reasons already explained) great difficulty in locating the restaurant, even with the taxi driver's help.

One American stranger, with wife, was conducted through another lovely garden by extremely lovely girls dressed in a modern kimono style. In a bright-colored, mat-covered and breathtaking reception room we exchanged our shoes for felt scuffs. From there, we were led to a bar and introduced to everybody present, including a middle-aged woman who appeared to be the restaurant manager.

We had cocktails and then moved across another garden to the dining room. An exquisite girl took a position behind each chair to pour sake as fast as it was consumed.

Sake is not very strong, by American cocktail standards, but one learns that it isn't a bad idea to let the small, eggshell-thin cups stand awhile before drinking and automatic refill—especially after the first five or six, and particularly when those follow manhattans.

Ricky asked, as the soup was served, why sake was drunk hot—a question she'd been thitherto unwilling to put to any

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

The heavy-set, white-haired ex-official chuckled. "There is only this reason—to make us think it is stronger, and that we are getting very drunk. We Japanese get drunk easily—and when we are drunk, we titter and are foolish."

"Let's," Ricky said, "titter and be foolish."

I have never had more fun.

Even the lovely waitresses joined in the jokes and laughter, for some spoke a little English—some quite a good deal.

We ate a score of different, delicately cooked seafoods, rice—and fruit more beautiful, big and flavorful than I'd seen before. Finally, tea was served.

We went into the night at long last, happily, and the restaurant ladies followed us, smiling, bowing almost to their knees, their laughter white in the cold, waving when we drove away.

"I *never* had more fun," Ricky said, when we were alone again. "So gay and happy! And so *democratic*! I didn't know the Japanese were capable of letting their hair down that much! They even included the cook and the sake girls in every conversation!"

A day or two before we left Tokyo, we were having lunch with Mrs. Cane and Lu at Chinzan-So, another pixilated garden restaurant, when I happened to say, "I had hoped we could go to a geisha house before we left. But we won't have time, now. Too bad."

Mrs. Cane stared and Lu almost lost her chopsticks. "You didn't *know*?" Lu murmured. "They said it was a *restaurant*? I suppose they did! On account of Mrs. Wylie."

I didn't get it. "*What* restaurant . . . ?"

"The professor—and the other men—took you to one of the finest modern geisha houses in Tokyo! That's where you had dinner!"

# China is no more

Guidebooks agree that Hong Kong harbor is among the world's three most spectacular. One treatise adds that the ideal manner of first viewing it is by air at sunset on a clear day. In late winter Hong Kong is often fogbound and a plane bound there from Japan may land instead at Manila. But when we arrived, the sun's edge stood on China's hills. And the books were right. Leather-hued islets along the coast floated sharp-shored on the blue sea; there was no haze. The Crown Colony, Hong Kong and Kowloon, swept below us and every building and wharf, hovel, sampan and junk, every ocean liner at anchor in the roadstead glowed brilliant and many-colored as the stained glass of cathedral windows.

The airport is on the Kowloon, or mainland, side; so is the Peninsula Hotel and a taut-faced English clerk received us there, gave us our mail, and helped us change Express checks into Hong Kong dollars, at about six for one. A Chinese in seedy blue serge uniform and a neat blouse took us up in an elevator. With us came luggage-bearing Chinese porters so young I insulted one by offering to carry our heaviest bag which he could barely lift from the floor. A Chinese hall porter in a white shirt and white duck trousers ushered us into our room.

We let the luggage sit, and, for a long while, stood at a casement window watching junks and sampans plod amongst big ships and ferries cross the harbor to Hong Kong, busy shuttles that wove white wakes in a blue bay. Across the water, signs with Chinese characters lit up: cerise, jade green, yellow—and indecipherable as those above the Ginza.

The next day we hired a car and a guide. We covered Kow-

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

could and staring at their empty, arid contours. We photographed a long, modern-looking train as it came from the Red border into this small, free zone. We took pictures of Chinese women with heavy pails on shoulder yokes wading ashore after gathering clams and seaweed in one of many azure-surfaced indentures, where sea invades barren superdunes. We inspected a sampan village: a swarm of overswarmed small boats where whole families lived, ate, copulated, gave birth and died—in pup-tent spaces. It smelled like that. We took the classical photograph of a junk with a saffron sail tacking across blue water past a distant hill town.

We drove down Chinese city streets lined with post-supported, rectilinear upper storeys: shops below and apartments above. The square posts colonnaded the curbs and were marked from top to bottom with crimson characters advertising wares for sale—an effect that big, square barberpoles might give a street: lively and bright. But every cement façade was time-stained and dank. Up-yawning stairs behind each entry penetrated dim regions where eternity devoted itself to the cultivation of mold and the perfection of hallway halitosis.

We went along miles of wide streets in the center of which dwelt thousands on thousands on thousands of human beings who had fled Red China, leaving behind friends and possessions and, often, families—to escape Communism at whatever risk or penalty. There they were, in a continuous strip of lesser Hoovervilles—“houses” made of old boards, rusty galvanized iron, bits of used linoleum, matting, tar paper, flattened-out tin cans, sides and ends of cartons—anything with surface that might hang together for a while and fend off the coldness of the winter, the rain, and the sun besides.

There is no place for the British Government to send those people. Who wants Chinese in hundreds of thousands?

Formosa—which is all that remains of free China—couldn't accommodate a tithe of the fugitives.

The British Government

## PHILIP WYLIE

from tyranny come by night—men and women and kids escaping by way of cities and hidden harbors up and down China's immense coast. The flea-thick, unwatchable sampans bring them to Hong Kong. Some may even swim the last miles. They also steal ashore from hiding-holes amidst the bales in freightholds; and they are landed in dead night by fishing junks. They push rafts into the "free-waters-called-fragrant" (the meaning of Hong Kong). Most have no skills to vend and bring nothing but themselves; untutored hands and limbs for hire in a glutted market.

Yet . . . they fled from the foulest antagonist in human history: Communism; they had that much pride, dignity, spirit, humanity and the British, like ourselves, pose as the committed enemy of their enemy—sustainers of free men and men who would gain liberty.

The Crown Colony—with outside help—does feed them as best it can, endeavors to house them as rapidly as possible, and tries to teach trades to as many as they can so they will have market worth. But there are *so many!* And so many new ones keep coming! The mere order of magnitude of the arriving numbers is only guessable—and by grisly means: Red China's accurate monthly report of how many would-be escapees are caught by the searchlights inside the Red border, machine-gunned, tracked down by dogs, impaled on the barbed-wire thickets, betrayed and prevented from attaining liberty by other barbaric methods, which Communists have to apply everywhere to keep people within their boundaries. That execution list is the only basis of colonial conjecture about those who escape and reach free territory. Lately, moreover, liberty under the squalid conditions in Kowloon has proven less tolerable than Red rule to some—and little wonder! Refugees, notably a large group of fishermen, have voluntarily, if sadly, sailed back to Communist China. Here is the Free World's *actual* "gift" to men loving freedom!

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

wife of a rich Chinese businessman to whom we had a letter of introduction. Mrs. Wong turned out to be the first truly inscrutable Oriental we had encountered. Whatever Ricky said, she answered with, "Hello?"—or silence.

So I tried Mr. Wong, at his place of business—and found myself talking to a graduate of Stanford! We were invited to dinner. And many aspects of the ensuing evening were unusual.

The various Wongs and their in-laws lived in a half-dozen houses on one large tract of scenic land. As the dinner guests gathered, Wongs kept arriving.

The first Wong to greet us was the pater familias, a man who possessed a large fortune in Shanghai. Stripped of it by the Japanese (who set him, his wife, and sundry Wongs on forced marches to prison camps), Grandpa Wong endured and some relatives also survived. Several made their way to Hong Kong, when victory brought release. They soon had new fortunes. Among the in-laws, too, was a Doctor Hu, famed for his contribution to biology made at Chicago University.

Besides ourselves, the many Wongs had invited a Dr. and Mrs. Pelp (Dr. Pelp was a retired professor of some sort) and an American banker with his wife, a Mr. Rockefeller (no kin), retired vice-president of a New York bank.

Two hours of convivial drinking from bottles on a tea wagon pushed about by a proud Chinese servant started off the evening. While Grandpa drank orange pop and Mr. Rockefeller uneasily consumed scotch, I had noted a catholicity in Wong aesthetic taste. Any niche might contain a lapis lazuli carving, or a magnificent jade jar. But, on a conspicuous window sill, stood a more plebian artifact: the two plaster pups which, in store windows or on counters, advertise Black and White whisky. Of course, the Wongs perhaps represented Black and White in the Colony. Still, the statuette—brand name clearly marked, life-size and as realistic as all such commercial art—made a sensational contrast with Ming ceramics.

We dined at a huge circular table, proceeding through

## PHILIP WYLIE

Pelps and Rockefellers: intermittent soups were served with porcelain spoons, but chopsticks only were provided for the rest. That disconcerted our American coquests.

Soon, a housefly buzzed our viands, touched our thin, beautiful chinaware, and examined the increasingly spattered damask tablecloth. Nonchalantly, Grandpa Wong drew from some recess under the table an ordinary fly swatter. With great aplomb, he reached far across the Arthurian table, and got the fly neatly—but to the discomfiture of the conventional, retired banker, who was already distressed by chopstick difficulties and appalled by the growing sabotage of the tablecloth. Enthusiastic splatter is good manners in China; besides, neat eating is out of the question. Mr. Rockefeller didn't know.

We were embarked on our fifth or sixth soup, our tenth or twelfth course. We had been served soups of chicken, shark fin, fish, and God knows what else. Ricky had already lamented not yet trying a "thousand-year-old egg"—an egg, that is, which has been buried in lime for a month or so, after which, chemically cooked and coal-black, it is exhumed—and eaten by the Chinese with éclat. Mr. Wong, Jr., had immediately summoned a servitor who soon produced such an egg. Ricky dug in and said then—says still—it was rich and delicious. Mrs. Pelp gingerly, gamely tried a morsel—and agreed.

Now, however, as another soup was served in another style and hue of thin porcelain bowl, Mr. Rockefeller—already put out of countenance by things like Ricky's taste for antiqued eggs—foolhardily asked, "What is *this* kind?"

"Bird's-nest soup," Mr. Wong, Jr., replied, easily yet attentively.

The Manhattan banker stared at and stirred the delicacy. "I don't see any straw or twigs," he quipped—or thought he quipped.

"The nests," Mr. Wong, Jr., replied genially—and possibly with concealed curiosity—"are made from the saliva of swallows. We hunt up such nests after the young birds have flown.

The swallow's nest is a delicate, white, cup-shaped structure, often found in the eaves of old Chinese buildings. It is made of the bird's saliva and is often dried and then used as a delicacy.



## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

ingly, Mr. Wong, Jr., lifted on chopsticks a sample of the transparent, gelatinous material of this certain swallow's "saliva" nest.

It dawned horridly on Mr. Rockefeller that the ornithology and cookery were true as stated. He glanced feverishly around the table. Ricky and I—like our Chinese friends—were spooning up the soup, which we liked greatly.

Mr. Rockefeller shuddered, and all but hid the spasm.

He searched out his new-filled highball, a deep topaz mix, and drank it down. Then he picked up a porcelain spoon—looked into the soup bowl again—and put down the spoon. He clenched his jaws and repressed a hard abdominal lunge that anybody could note. He smiled.

This was a Life Crisis for him—an East-meets-West challenge. Mr. Wong, Jr., watched covertly; Grandpa lifted an occasional eye to discern whether will power or nausea would win the battle. I wondered myself. Groton and Harvard were being put to a test for which neither well-rounded school had prepared this illustrious grad.

Mr. Rockefeller grew pale.

I all but retched for him. Yet I *hoped*.

The man had what it takes.

Our compatriot abruptly snatched up the bowl in both hands and gulped its contents down.

During the next ninety or a hundred seconds, Mr. Rockefeller sat still. Pretty still. From my angle I could see his abdomen repeatedly try to explode. His Adam's apple made several risky up-and-down trips. But his New England will repressed every signal, every time.

Pretty soon he could speak; and he did so: "*Delicious!*"

It was triumph—as clear a case of one-upmanship as I've witnessed. No wonder his folks won at Bunker Hill!

# the "childishly friendly" Thais

The flight from Hong Kong to Bangkok was routine. Yet Ricky and I do not remember it as tedious!

Did you expect, when you studied geography in Grade Seven, ever to fly down the South China Sea? Can you recall the locus and map-look of such Seas? And would you find it uneventful to fly a course, on a clear day, which brought you to the realm where English Anna met that exotic King? Would you not find it Adventure, if a low coastal plain, come suddenly under your wing, was Indo-China—lands called Vietnam, Laos and Thailand?

The jungle rivers were map-designated Nam, Menam and Mekong. And as we looked down at hills precipitous under a green jungle robe, we followed other watercourses to alluvial widenings where mud-hut, thatch-roofed villages lay in small squares alongside pale green oblongs of growing rice.

The thatched roofs of the villages lay along fairly straight lines; the intersecting paths showed rectangular intent. Greater precision appeared in the squared corners of rice paddies. There, property was concerned, not mere urban convenience. Men—even the Vietnamese (and their forebears who probably had staked out the fields centuries ago)—survey whatever concerns their pocketbooks with care. . . .

Just before landing, a loud-speaker cleared its throat. Our captain told us what to do about customs. And he added that the shade temperature on the ground was ninety-four degrees—  
long nose. Bangkok.

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

The passengers set up a murmur audible above the slowing motors.

The plane bumped, reversed props, halted—and we filed out.

I drew in a good, deep breath and started for the terminal on the hot concrete—carrying two coats, a camera and my on-board bag.

My heart had revved up, to tide me over the snows of Chicago, wintry fog in San Francisco, sub-seventy rains of Oahu, Tokyo blizzards and the tweed-and-sweater frigor that doubtless the insentient British have imported to the Crown Colony. Now, my pulse was gratefully returning to its easy Caribbean beat.

Ricky relished as much as I the mold-spiced midday of Siam. But most of our companions, as a disillusioned official of the air line presently predicted, hied—or dragged themselves—to travel agencies, canceled their five or ten days' stay, and got out of the region by the earliest plane available. . . .

A taxi rolled us along macadam on which two cars could barely pass and wooden-wheeled carts drawn by assorted beasts forced the cab to a shoulder. The way was lined for some distance by queen's crepe myrtle trees—in bloom. A canal bordered the thoroughfare; and in Thailand, canals are called klongs.

The klong was lined with unpainted wooden homes that had shrines on posts instead of letter boxes. In the klongs, kids swam and men paddled desultory boats. Above the klongs monkeypod and bo (or po) trees slanted—and banana trees dangled ripe fruit in easy reach. Jacarandas, golden shower trees of sundry species, royal poincianas, *cochlospermum variatum*, mangoes, and half a hundred other trees furnished a perfumed shade and laid petal carpets on the water, amongst lotuses.

Our taxi was soon dodging amongst rickshaws, samlors (a kind of rickshaw-bike), motorized samlors, trucks and cars from all the world, and brown people who wore those "hats like plates" Noel Coward ascribes to the Malay States.

## PHILIP WYLIE

ordinary buildings—and our taxi reached the King's Hotel. Its doorman was an outsized Thai in what seemed the residue of a military uniform. He did not notice us until we had carried our own luggage halfway from cab to portal: an earnest discussion with loitering friends had taken his attention from his job. Now he saw us and leaped, all one grin. He used every limb and muscle to welcome us, so that he seemed to dance.

The lobby was very dark and its "desk" almost indiscernible, after the sun-dazed outdoors. We registered. Boy-sized, faun-hued men picked up our bags and our accommodating eyes now saw that the foyer opened into a bar, a restaurant, a money-changer's emporium, a place that sold black sapphires, the patio and a hall. Several sapphires gleamed dully above a ten-watt bulb in a glass case hung on the wall. I made a brief stop at the money-changer's and then went up two long, broad flights of unwall'd but roofed stairs, meditating ticals. I found our door. I tipped our porters—too much, I immediately felt certain. Ticals are tough.

The next days we spent in tourism. . . .

We visited the Temple of the Golden Buddha where a figure of that great man, some hundred-and-umpteenth feet long, lies in gilded glory—beneath a leaky roof and between walls from which ancient murals have scaled like decals on the legs of wading kids. The sandals on that image are taller by far than I—and their soles are scored, I noted approvingly. For Buddha needed traction: his work, like every good man's, was uphill all the way.

We also paid our respects to the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, having by then hired a tall, thin, odd-looking guide named Charlie. He was, I would guess, part Chinese and part Swedish, but all Thai insofar as attitude, manner and accent were concerned.

One morning we rashly decided to climb the outside of the tallest "prang" of Wat Arun, a tower called the "Temple of the Dawn" or the "Dawning of the Day."

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

A giddy caper, that Temple ascent proved. Two hundred feet high, or more—and leaning, slightly—it was a crumbling structure of stone and mortar in which were set millions of bits of chinaware—some of it, apparently, the broken dishes of upper-class Thais. Steps led up its near-vertical exterior, steps about six inches wide but irregular and often narrower, with risers of eighteen inches or more . . . the steepest staircase I ever saw. Iron pipe handrails, rusted and sleazy-looking, were dubiously fastened on both sides. Eighty or ninety feet of such an escadade towered before us.

Above that grooved precipice we found another, even steeper stone stairway.

Ricky hesitated a little—and started up the second flight. As I followed, I gave the iron banisters a test yank. It sent ripples up the bars, but they did not quite come away in my hands.

A walled walk allowed us to visit all four sides of the holy organ and to look out from every compass point. A glance down the double set of stairs was alarming: they were steep enough to give pause to a Pueblo and descent—more difficult—cried for pitons, rope and a trusty ice axe.

Far, far below us, on a scaffold of twitchy bamboo, Thai artisans were giving a new gilding to a stupa—a tower a good hundred feet high. Watching them, noting the flimsy nature of their support, made my stomach shrink.

Beyond them was the Chao Phraya River; across that, the stalagmite fantasy that is the Royal Palace; all around it—Bangkok.

Bangkok is strange beyond dreaming. I thought Frank L. Baum surely saw the city, or pictures of it, before he had his first inkling of Oz.

Buddha, I also thought, would be astounded by what these Southern, Oriental people had done for him. Done with architecture and decoration, with swirling incense and tinkling temple bells—even though his magnificent philosophy (like

## PHILIP WYLIE

and-mammary-shaped edifices, in green, ochre, peacock, scarlet, purple and gilded halls, in labyrinths both mural-lined and mosaic-adorned—lost amidst infinite friezes inset with a million tiny mirrors, in eye-hurting dazzlement and the cantanabulation of ten thousand miniature brass bells rung by the wind—in the ritual roar of gongs—drowned by drums and obscured by minty smoke. Buddha might not have scoffed—for he was knowing and preached mercy. But he would surely have repeated his apothegms sadly, for here and elsewhere they have been honored in the breach, the pixilated extravagant breach. It all made me wonder, as I often do, what Jesus would say of my culture, that imagines itself Christian.

I had Ricky pose for a picture against the enchanted city and the temples, too—the resplendent images of reverence which millions of men and women used up centuries to paint, grave, inlay, bemirror, emboss, gild, bell, scent and set nagas against the tropic sky to guard.

Suddenly I noticed Ricky had gone chalk white.

“Sick?”

“I’ve never been high-shy anywhere in my life before!” she whispered, in a voice that appalled me. “I *can’t* go back down, Phil! I don’t know how I’ll make it!”

She laughed at herself, a brave parry at hysteria. “I’m like a cat in a tall elm! You’ll have to send for the fire department to rescue me!”

So I rescued Ricky. Testing the iron rails again, taking her cumbersome handbag, I went to the head of the top flight of stairs, turned my back on its mail-chute pitch and gripped both rails.

“Now. You turn around. Take both rails. Start down. I’ll be right in back of you and my arms will be on both sides.” I decided not to add that, even if she fainted from vertigo, I could and would catch her.

Tremulously, she turned. Anxiously, she lowered a sandal-shod foot and felt for the narrow step below. It was a long reach—nearly two feet—in that step

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

With the second, slow-reaching step, Ricky lied: "I'm fine, now!"

We learned, afterward, that climbing the Temple of the Dawn was, for Buddhists, a spiritual rite; the steps had deliberately been made very risky to point a moral: the way to heaven is not easy.

"Sure, you're okay," I said then.

Down we went. Ten feet, fifty. A hundred feet. And down. Charlie had watched uneasily.

"I do not have heart for this climb," he said when we reached the ground. "The view was handsome, modom?"

Ricky said it was and we returned to our boat on the river. . . .

Ricky and I boated through the floating market of Bangkok in a low-powered, double-prowed craft with a brass engine that looked like Japanese handiwork. A wooden awning shaded us; we had a boy aboard to help with landings, a man to steer—and Charlie to tell all.

I will not ever forget those people who lived on water streets. Everybody bathed and all the kids swam at their own doorsteps. Each merchant—seller of hot coffee or ice, yard goods, coal, wood or hardware—had a small boat painted an identifying color. Each also had a gong, bell, drum or rattle that announced his type of wares, as he approached. The super-market in Bangkok comes to *you*.

Some canal-fronting homes bore street numbers; and there were electric "street lights" overhead. We even witnessed the house-to-house calls of a meter reader from the local power company: he also was water-borne.

Graybeards and grandmas, infants, teen-agers, lovely girls smiled as we passed, laughed with us, and waved until our arms were weary from waving back, our faces stiff from smiling.

We visited the Ceremonial Barges, great gilded canoes with seats for many oarsmen and all the Many-Colored Monkeys as

## PHILIP WYLIE

they were, plainly, Siam's parade floats, ready to adorn every Imperial ceremony of importance.

But enough! Siam is a place not to read about or see in movies but a place to be.

The books say the Siamese are "childishly friendly."

I'm not sure about the childishness.

Is warmth and affection proffered to everybody, childish? If so, reticence, or suspicion or even hostility on any first encounter must be evidence of maturity! Why are they so amiable?

Living is easy in Thailand: not much shelter is needed—or clothing. Food grows abundantly. Rice-rich Siam has by far the greatest favorable per capita trade balance of any Asian country. Such factors create a human condition of contentment that makes friendliness the natural approach of people to people.

Thais are easily amused; and fun is a major goal in their pattern of living.

Perhaps that is childish. But perhaps our Western ideas of efficiency and progress are not so much mature as compulsive. Could it be, that life is meant to be enjoyed as it occurs—and not according to plane schedules, time clocks and an annual two weeks at some seashore resort? Is it, perchance, more meaningful to live at a leisured pace that leaves room now for innocent curiosity, laughter, watching things designed for watching . . . ?

I often think of Bangkok—and I mean to go back.

It will probably be different, then.

It's changing. . . .

For instance, they're getting TV now. One afternoon when I stopped in a bar for a drink I watched a lovely Thai lass discourse on what I was sure was some very poetical theme: a TV set above the bar held her image. She was so gentle, so appealing, so courteous and so enchanting, I could almost imagine what she was saying: something wondrous, about love. Abruptly she reached out of the scene, and produced—a tube of Ipana toothpaste. . . .



# the Un-American Indians

We flew too far north of Rangoon to see it from the air. We did see a road that evidently led to Mandalay, though I think it was not Kipling's. Over the Bay of Bengal hung a fine red dust and where ocean currents collected it, like pollen on a windy pond in autumn, it made rosy acres.

Calcutta was immensity-in-lights, low keyed, smoke swathed, its airport a pale crosshatching of concrete, parallel runway lights, an orbiting beacon, the fuzz-blue glow of a control tower. Cherry-red obstacle lights flashed beneath us like sparks. We saw the dull yellow squares of the terminal interior. Whoever wins the earth—free men or those who consent to tyranny—this much will *already* be standardized.

A Mr. Chidra was there to meet us. Always somebody! Somebody helpful, as Ricky and I were passed from hand to hand like registered mail.

At some point in the ensuing dim miscellany of inspection and passport checking, I was accosted by a thin, young man in a brown tweed suit whose name was Mr. Gudra. He wore steel-rimmed spectacles. Behind them black, high-gloss eyes held me with attention magnified. He began asking questions. I gathered Mr. Gudra represented the Calcutta press and I was as patient with him as I was able.

But finally the sticky-staccato questions in jew's-harp monotone upset me. I tried to get away. Every time I turned, Mr. Gudra anticipated, and set himself to block that side.

## PHILIP WYLIE

On and on his questions went in the tone of an importuning cicada.

Exhausted, leaning against the wall, shutting my eyes against the migrainous saffron glare of the place, I tried to think. Was Communist influence increasing in Siam and what did I mean by answering, "Quien sabe?"

I meant that Thailand had long been enthusiastically "pro" USA. But, evidently, Thailand was now getting in a position to try to play the Reds against the Americans, hoping to profit both ways.

Did I not believe the Thais had a right to do that? (He sounded hostile.)

Certainly, I believed they had the right. But I thought—indeed, I *knew*—the game was foolish.

How could I know that?

Anybody who understands Communism knows that.

What did I think of the Autherine Lucy outrage?

I could not recall what the "Autherine Lucy outrage" was. But Mr. Chidra bailed me out.

I went gladly—and with a faint grin. For I saw Mr. Gudra swing his long nose and gleaming spectacles on Ricky. She has more patience and humanity than I; but she was as weary; and when the need is dire she has a tartness which seems feather light on first touch but soon becomes a veritable bludgeon. Mr. G. was for it.

I found a beefy customs inspector in a dirty uniform eying our luggage as if he knew there was a time-bomb in it somewhere, or as if from long and repulsive experience he'd learned the suitcases of all Americans contained live maggots. But the painstaking search I'd expected—the opening of every talcum powder box—did not occur. Instead, to my immeasurable surprise, the big lugubrious pudge broke out a broad if sockety smile, reached across the customs bench, shook my hand, said, "Welcome to India, Mr. Wylie," and chalked my bags without lifting a lid.

And the drive into the city began.

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

It was dark except where rows of shabby shops, lit by kerosene lanterns, threw a feeble gleam into the crowded thoroughfare. Mr. Chidra drove at more than forty miles an hour. In obedience to some law I still regarded as insane, he used only his parking lights. When calamity was imminent he would lean forward, take his eyes from the highway, and momentarily switch on the beam of his headlamps.

It was a shocking ride.

A ride through night hot as hell, yet lacking the glare of Inferno.

People filled the road, gutter to gutter, and made the least possible room for us, at the last possible instant. Men constantly bounded in the chiaroscuro ahead, white turbans hurtling every which way, like popping corn. Animals everywhere budged slowly, or not at all—just turning enormous horns on us, and red fundi that glittered balefully. Brakes slammed then, and we whipped round the living roadblocks: sacred cattle and water buffaloes, goats, camels, dogs, cats, horses, burros, monkeys and night birds. Men in hundreds and women and children. People in white garments and burlap and dirty rags that once had been colored red or blue or yellow. Men and women and children and animals in *thousands*. And in *tens* of thousands. *Myriads* of beasts.

Every brief, emergency stab of the headlights showed a living river that ran infinitely ahead, its banks the crammed stalls where people ate, talked, bought, sold, and slept on the nude earth in the light of one lantern here and one lamp yonder.

This infernal rat race was run to the accompaniment of human tongues telling every emotion. From occasional loudspeakers also came blasts of incomprehensible music, rendered more obscure by the Doppler effect. Now and then we rocketed by a beating drum or the reedy semitones of what seemed tuneless flutes. Once, I heard American jazz. With this was mingled the groans, hoots and jibbering of beasts. And a smell . . . ! The hot, dusty atmosphere was damply impregnated with *the smell*

## PHILIP WYLIE

Each Asian land had had its particular effluvium. Tokyo's streets are charcoal smoke, fat cooking and, in that pleasant mix, an undertone of incense. Chinese environs were subtly different. At night, a most strange sweetness rose unaccountably from Hong Kong's harbor. Thailand is pervaded by the odd mintiness of its fundamental condiment.

But there is a sourness and a charred tang in India's air, stronger and more prevailing than its other essences—and the spice of it is curry. Indian food and places have a flat, faintly sour, tarlike underscent. I did not get entirely accustomed to it and I was almost on the point of leaving before I identified its basic ingredient: the pungent, punky stench of burning dung.

The city grew up gradually around us—buildings, familiar yet vaguely different—crowds moving, yet curiously quiet. Low-keyed city lights were soon augmented by traffic lights. Our pace became less sweatily alarming. But still the jam of men and beasts was everywhere—men and sacred animals on sidewalks, and asleep beneath street signs, and busy smoking and mooing and spitting and defecating along miles of red-brick, sooty, gewgawed rows of apartment houses evidently put up by England in Victoria's reign.

Then an open area lay ahead on our right—the Maidan, Calcutta's proud park. Next—unimpressive in façade as a back street tavern in a Western slum—our hotel. The Indian room clerks talked English. So did the head porter. A dozen subordinate porters, in filthy turbans and brown rags tattered enough to be costumes, picked up our luggage—one man to each item, whatever its size.

I saw an Exchange window, quickly tore out some travelers' checks and gathered up a handful of new, unintelligible banknotes, along with assorted, unreadable coins.

Ricky and I followed a safari of porters across a lovely garden where a dance band played and women in saris danced—beyond tall dahlias standing in pots and citrus trees in blossom. A little elevator took us to a brass-faced door, hard to

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

push open for good reason: the corridor beyond was air-conditioned. So was our high-ceilinged, handsome room!

I quickly calculated that my ten porters could hardly do with less than a dime each. I decided that a dime was too little for the long walk—doubled it in my mind—and, when the picturesque, pathetic band had set the luggage about, I paid them the rupees I guessed to be equivalent. Heads bent, foreheads were touched, the room susurrated with “Salaams.” They went.

“You shouldn’t tip them till we go,” Ricky said.

“No?”

“It was in the guidebook. Didn’t you read it?”

“No.”

“How much did you give them?”

“About two bucks.”

“They’ll *haunt* us, from here on in!”

And they did. I never had such service—or hated “service” more: my tip had typed me as a rich American sucker. I could not drop a candy wrapper but a dozen heads would lunge and hands reach, to restore it to me. Then the hands would continue to reach—*out*. I did not get the situation under control, in Calcutta. To rid ourselves of swarming attention took a fresh start with new minions, in Benaras.

During lunch at the hotel the next day a man in bizarre costume approached our table and set out on it three small pottery figures. I assumed he was trying to sell them—and waved him away. He protested but, believing I was onto such tactics, I all but bellowed at the man to beat it. He went—ruefully. Soon the bell captain appeared—an imposing bird whose station was embroidered in English on his white and gold uniform. He brought back the figurines, along with a paper the other man had showed me which described the pottery images. The bell captain explained:

“He was not trying to sell these to you, Mr. Wylie. They are a gift from a Mr. Gudra. They are copies of Mr. Gudra’s moth-

## PHILIP WYLIE

er's gods—and one small clay elephant, for a fun. This is the elephant." He set it on the tablecloth. "This is Lord Shiva." (Shiva had a fierce moustache and a white cloak.) "This is Juggernaut." (Black-skinned, in red, blue and yellow garments.) "Mr. Gudra's mother is from the Sunderbunds, where Juggernaut is worshiped. He would like you to let him talk with you this afternoon. He waits outside."

I thanked—and tipped—the bell captain. I hefted the gods. "About a pound and a half," I said. "Nearly a kilo. How'n hell will we fly this junk around . . . ?"

I stopped, because Ricky looked guilty. She spoke uneasily. "I told Mr. Gudra, last night, you'd see them late this afternoon. Isn't it charming of him—to make you a gift?" She turned to the bell captain. "Tell him to bring his friends about five. Mr. Wylie will talk to them in the garden."

The captain beamed, salaamed—and departed.

"What in hell," I asked, "is *this*? That damned reporter was as sticky as flypaper——"

"Reporter?" Ricky echoed with surprise. "Mr. Gudra isn't a reporter!"

"Then what is he?"

Ricky was admiring the ceramic gods—and smiling. "Phil, you really do miss a lot. That Indian has met every Bangkok plane for three days. To greet *you*. He's a tremendous fan for your books! He is president of a *fan club* for your books."

"A fan club? In *Calcutta*? For me? Holy . . . jumping . . . God . . . Almighty!"

"Well. You know how Indians are. They always want you to feel fine. It could be—Mr. Gudra's crowd are fans for various writers and you're just one. But you *are* one. . . ."

I was dazed. "He did know a lot about my books. . . ."

"He knows every character in every novel! He can quote *Generation of Vipers*, by the page."

I said vaguely, "And he's not a—journalist—at all?"

"No. He works for the Five Borough Bank. Our Bank in

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

New York City. And all he wants is to bring some of the fans to meet you. It'll be fun for you."

"Okay," I said. "Okay. I give up. In fact, maybe I ought to give up writing—if Calcutta Hindus are spying on me."

"They're quite literate."

And I'd thought—at the airport—that she would give Mr. G. the Ricky-Wylie brush-off. Instead, she had invited him to invite his friends!

Promptly at five, Mr. Gudra was announced, by phone.

I went down, passing the garden, where music played for tea dancing and Sikhs in red, gold, white and blue uniforms with peacock feathers in their turbans served drinks and tea and crumpets. I had two big tables set aside for my guests:

The brilliant, sensitive Mr. Gudra would doubtless be accompanied by several learned students, a professor or so, and perhaps one or two dark, lovely girls in scarlet saris who, being oriented toward the Occident, would enjoy dancing.

Mr. Gudra waited in the lobby.

Alone.

He was dressed in one of those mosquito-net things Ghandi used to wear, a loose garment, caught up at the crotch, draped over an arm and shoulder, but leaving bare the cobby shanks. Mr. Gudra was about as scrawny as Ghandi. Furthermore, his drapery, though once white, was now dirty—and quite damp.

"The others," he said as his June-bug eyes descried me, "could not come. It is, after all, Lord Shiva's birthday. They are bathing. I, myself, have just left the temple after ritual in the Hooghly River." His dhoti, or whatever the sleazy toga is called, was stained and dank. These people bathe in their shifts and dry out later, usually. He hadn't had time.

I led the way to the garden. I'd seen nobody in the hotel in Gudra's garb except sweepers and porters. The Sikh waiters took a palpably dim view of my guest as I signaled that we'd need one small table only.

## PHILIP WYLIE

My fan apologized for his fish-net costume, but with a smug expression. "I am not, myself, religious in any way," he informed me. "I do this merely to please my family."

I laughed somewhat hollowly at myself: how often we over-anticipate an event—dress ourselves with expectant care—and find a romantic fantasy turns out to be three-legged races, indoor baseball and apple ducking! But since Mr. Gudra was ordering tea with meek aplomb I decided that no Hindu and no living Sikh could outpoise me. So I beamed at the man and thanked him for the little Bengal gods.

My guest seemed incredulous. "You really mean you like them?"

"Of course! Especially, the thoughtfulness."

His eyes shimmered.

We talked about books for a while—and about India. He told many new and absorbing facts. And then he mentioned America:

"Things are pretty horrible there."

"Are they?" I asked.

His joy at our amity became abrupt regret.

"We are, my friend, not a black people," Gudra began loftily. "Not a Negro people. We have brown skins, however. Some of us—as from Kashmiri—not very brown: wheat-hued skins. We are *Aryan*. Related to you." Mr. Gudra gave me his profile. "Do our eyes slant? Are our lips thick? Our noses without bridges? We are white men in a sun-baked climate! Yet we cannot identify with you. Americans crucify all people of color."

Indians are exceedingly polite; they usually seem gentle and loving; they frequently yield their own attitudes, graciously, to accede to yours. But their emotions are often exaggerated.

"Crucify people of color?" I repeated. "*Do* we? Of course, we have race problems—religious bigotry—like everybody else——"

"Like Russia?" he asked softly.



## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

"I have never been outside Bengal."

"Well—go up, some time. They've had pogroms under Stalin. They tell *you* everybody's equal. But I'd hate to try to be a good Hindu—or a good anything else—in Russia. A few Negroes were around when I was there—big shots from other countries. They seemed to regard them as the French do: interesting curiosities. Some Soviet women wanted to sleep with them—just as white men like to try Chinese girls. But Russia never had a great number of Negroes, left over from slavery. Or a large group of the descendants of slaveowners who had been whupped in a civil war. I mean, a group like poor Americans in the South, trying to hide guilty feelings and yet maintain superiority in the human pecking order. After all—no living Negro *accepted* slavery. Not one white person, alive, ever *imported* a slave. It's a sad inheritance, our problem. But in Communist Russia—they still have slavery. They 'segregate' for mere difference of opinion—not even color. They still persecute Jews. I've even talked to people in Russia who had been 'segregated'—enslaved—and escaped. I think what a free man despises is a man who'll *accept* persecution, slavery, discrimination. Better *die* resisting."

"Drastic measures *must* be used to create a new world."

"Why?"

He changed the subject slightly: "The Autherine Lucy outrage——" he began.

I liked this little botfly, but I was beginning to perceive his indoctrination. "You a Red?"

"I am apolitical."

"I see this Autherine Lucy stuff in the headlines of the local leftist paper," I said. "And other papers pick up every slanted item from the Red press!"

"We are brown people," he interrupted. "We—feel deeply. That poor American girl! Her crime was to want to enter a university when she was merely . . . black! Which is like brown."

I tacked. "You call yourself 'apolitical.' Okay. You say you

## PHILIP WYLIE

call it filial piety. Maybe you are Communist in sympathy—but not out loud. I see the Indian government takes a dim view of Reds—and besides, you work for an American bank. But how can I tell what you believe? I wonder if you know, yourself?”

“Our papers of *every* kind are incensed. You Americans have stoned the automobile of a colored woman . . . !”

“Yeah. I skimmed about six newspapers in the bathtub, just now. The commie sheet set the line—and tossed in a few lies. The other papers followed.”

“You deny this educated woman was refused admission to that Louisiana University? You deny her automobile was stoned?”

My own emotions became somewhat exaggerated at that point. “Look,” I spoke so loudly that nearby heads turned, “don’t ever mention Aurtherine Lucy to me again, Gudra. Not ever!” I picked up his teaspoon—the only noisemaker on the table—and beat with it: “I don’t want and I will not let any Hindu or Moslem ever *mention* her name to me! After all, *I am an American*. I am proud of the distance my country has gone toward freedom. It is not perfect. But no alien slobs, covered with blood, can talk like that to an American!”

“Why—but—” he gasped. “Do you deny——”

“Of course, they didn’t let her join the college! And they did dent the Cadillac she rode in, with rocks. *So what?* America has a racial problem—several—and religious intolerance—*sure!* But no *slaves*. Russia has maybe *twenty million*.” I half stood and leaned into the face of this Vedantic creep. “Only a short while ago, the gutters outside *this very hotel* ran scarlet with the blood of *fifty thousand Hindus and Moslems* who murdered each other in street riots! *Fifty thousand people!* And you have the incredible gall to sit there and talk to me in lofty, censorious terms because one American person has her car dented by a few brickbats! God damn it, are you crazy?

“What kind of hypocrites are you Indians, anyhow? *Look!* If fifty thousand Americans are ever murdered in race or reli-

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

can talk to *me* about Autherine Lucy! *But not till then!* Because we Americans, so help me, are a thousand times as close to liberty, decency, tolerance, brotherhood—as you mass-murdering Indians! And we're a *billion* times nearer than Russia even pretends to *want* to become! So shut up, you!"

Having temporarily finished, I shut up, too. I then saw that Mr. Gudra was shaking all over and panting. He took a portion of his mosquito-net garment in a quivering hand and wiped his brow. People stopped looking at us, one by one. The dance band began a loud number—evidently, in case I had more to say. I had, but I gave him the other barrel quietly:

"How, pal, can any Hindu mention *segregation* to an American, as an exclusively American sin? I never heard of any white American rushing to church to get 'cleansed' because a Negro's shadow fell on him. But some of you people do. You have millions upon millions of 'Untouchables' who are segregated and treated like dirt—who share your color and your gods! Yet you accuse *America* . . . !" I broke off.

*He began to weep.*

"You see," I murmured, "I, *too*, have deep feelings."

"Lord," he said hoarsely. "Lord. I *do* see! I never thought of it that way. Mr. Wylie—you have greatly illuminated the darkness of my mind! You have enlightened me!" He stopped sobbing the instant he perceived he was enlightened: Indians love enlightenment. His face lit up with joy. "I expected greatness of you!"

I skipped what was no compliment but a neat play to regain his self-assurance. I said grimly, "See that you *stay* enlightened."

Ricky appeared soon after that—and we had a nice time.

I was relieved, to see that Mr. Gudra—when he took his leave—was calm, but thoughtful. And dry, too. In his gentle but impassioned way he might even start heckling Red-tinged compatriots.

# Ganges and Ghats

It was our first experience of Air India.

The plane was a DC3—its stewardess a tall, angular young woman—very skinny—with fingers like pointed pencils and gorgeous black eyes. The pilot and copilot were high school boys, I surmised.

Like the Russian commercial pilots I'd nervously endured in 1936, these casual kids felt that a passenger line was meant to furnish merry adventure—for them. They got the plane in the air.

Coffee, fruit and other comestibles in cartons and an American Army locker lay about. At every take-off and landing those stores, along with assorted luggage, freight, express, coats and privately owned junk parked anywhere, crashed about the plane. Sometimes, a cargo-shift occurred during flight—tilting the plane abruptly and causing an abrupt reflex at the controls. All in all, it was quite a change from Pan-Am and BOAC! We left the green lands and were soon flying over the plain of India. In the next hours, as in hours of other flights, I looked out and down. This time, I learned something of the meaning of the Indian village.

The land became sere, often naked; escarpments of colored rock rose from the March-brown terrain—crags like the wind-crenelated mesas of our Southwest. A sparse peppering of cattle could be seen, occasionally, or a strawstack; but the earth looked infertile. Yet there were villages. Hundreds. *Thousands.*

Footpaths led from each cluster of mud hutments to the next. These paths joined cart tracks at distances long for a man walking, or even bullock-hauled. Each such double rut ultimately connected with a meandering dirt road. So every village

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

way there was long and circuitous and though it went across semidesert. Sometimes, amidst spaced clusters of twenty, even fifty mud huts, a larger village appeared, a village showing some added, pitiful sign of its prestige: green tops of a few trees breasting a roof of red tile, an edifice that had been white-washed or even some structure of painted boards. Still less frequently, one boasted a quonset hut, reflecting the sunshine with a shattering, silver glare.

I could understand why characters in Indian novels measure distance by village count: the mud hamlets are not mathematically located; but points "five" or "ten villages away" must be approximately equidistant, in whatever direction.

Some say India has five, and some, six hundred thousand of these villages; all say they *are* India.

The thought of people down there in the cinnamon-red dust (or the sodden monsoons), millions, millions, millions of almost literally "Iron Age people" or even "New Stone Age," brimmed my brain—choked it. For a time I felt as if Asia was meaningless to an Occidental: a human spawning-ground that might, in some next ten thousand years replace man—if, say, his civilized minority should blast and ray itself to extermination.

We landed in Patna with an alarming avalanche. The air, the heated sunlight, was welcome after that clattering skycoop where the management forbade even a cigarette. Smoking in air overbreathed, air acid with Asian sweat, might have smothered us all.

In the bake-oven afternoon we bargained with various Indians for transportation to town. They would talk awhile and then disappear, although there seemed to be no way to vanish: just airstrips, burnt grass, the little terminal and few cars standing in the heat. (Ultimately, I realized that Indians "vanish" and "reappear," not because they use the rope trick but because you fail to identify them until you come to know them as individuals.)

Finally, I manhandled my own luggage from a cart, button-

## PHILIP WYLIE

money—and we drove through the tidy countryside into the wide, shaded, pleasant streets of India's most sacred city. Our guide was by no means inscrutable or unapproachable or even disreputable. He had merely been trying to get for himself and his Sikh driver the most promising of the Calcutta passengers. We qualified—after he'd studied everyone. As we proceeded down a broad, neat thoroughfare of Benaras, we decided to hire his team permanently.

Once we had made the deal, our young guide's English improved remarkably. So did his general comprehension: he had seemed vague as fog, at the airport. Ricky found, before we reached our attractive hotel, that he was a law student in the University of Benaras, working his way as a guide, and attending lectures when he had funds. By the next evening, I think we had seen him at least through Torts.

His name was Bandra. He was loquacious, fascinating and appealing—especially after he learned our tipping habits (and also, I felt, our politics—or, more precisely, our philosophy where political concepts were concerned). But pretty much everyone in India wanted to know our sentiments about world relationships before becoming chummy.

At our hotel we made the acquaintance of some people named Brown, from Gary, Indiana: man, wife—and their son, a university student taking time out to travel, or possibly employing a period of suspension to continue learning by other means. I suspected the latter owing to his discomfort when I tried talking about college. So I didn't inquire. The Browns were nice people. He owned a chain of stores. Baptists, but not the "Hard-Shell" division.

After lunch the Browns took off for the Monkey Temple and other centers of that sort of worship most Americans regard as "pornographic." We were asked to go along but had already made plans for an expedition to Sarnath. At Sarnath is the Deer Park where Buddha first disclosed to his five friends the

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

broken stupa had domed up in a weedy pasture, here; and Lord Curzon had dug it out as well as a ruined monastery that stood in Buddha's time (and before). A nearby museum now contains more local archeological findings.

So we walked where Buddha had walked and I stood on the very patch of grass where—they say—he spoke words that echo still, like Jesus' talks—and preceded many of them in thought, content and meaning.

Bandra told us about the place and its history. (Indeed, that day and all the next, the young law student talked with earnest brilliance about old India, and new, and about the world as he saw it. He described the world the Indian Hindus saw, and the Moslems—and discussed knowingly what Nehru and the government described in their future.)

Sarnath was busier than it had been, perhaps, in all its history. For in another year—according to Buddhist calculations in India and China, though not in Siam and Indo-China—precisely two thousand, five hundred years would have passed since Buddha had begun his teaching. The great stupa was under repair; hostels were going up; roads were being widened. Pilgrims would flock to Sarnath in 1957.

In the morning, we were driven by our chauffeur, along with Bandra, to the top of the ghats—for the trip that is the tourist *pièce de résistance* in Benaras. . . .

Almost as long ago as I can remember, I've heard about those ghats in the Holy City on the Ganges. Missionaries from India—horrified Sunday school texts—or outraged magazine accounts acquainted me, early, with the gruesome riverside and its ghastly practices.

Here the dead were burned over open fires! Here, still, a widow sometimes avoided official surveillance to burn alive in reverent agony. Here, in short, was the essence of grue—real-life tableau that outstripped the grisliest dream of Poe. Books like *Mother India* have authenticated the grisliness of that fearful

## PHILIP WYLIE

snapped at the devotees, consumed with gluttonous, gnashing teeth the unburned residue of everybody—and caught a few pilgrims alive!

It just wasn't so. . . .

A cumbersome small boat took Ricky and me—with Bandra—out on the water on a morning overcast, cool and very windy. There aren't saurians in the river, which is fairly wide at Benaras and, compared to American city rivers, *clean*.

Once, I saw an unmistakable porpoise break and roll in the green, quite clear water. And porpoises do not frequent polluted water, in my experience. After we had rowed and drifted for a couple of hours, the sun came out.

On the city side, the ghats—stone-paved terraces—rose steeply for perhaps a hundred feet. Interspersed with them were temples, shrines and residences of devout, rich Hindus. Though the day was at first chilly, several thousand men and women were bathing in the water, drying their garments afterward, and dipping up brass jars of the sacred fluid to take to temples—or to homes both distant and nearby. Bandra, by looking at the saris of the women, could tell us from what parts of India most of the pilgrims had come.

The Ganges' opposite shore was low, sandy and without houses: an alluvial flat, flooded at times. But, as the morning warmed, people appeared there, too—set down baskets, doffed clothing behind reedy patches of brush, and swam. I assumed that they were holy-bathing; but when I asked Bandra, he shook his head. "They are Moslems. Having a picnic."

"The river isn't holy for them?"

"No. Just a good place to swim."

"Don't the Hindus mind?"

"Why? It is a big enough river for us all."

Occasionally, in the early morning, a drift of smoke from upstream ghats brought a faint odor like the fat-charred element in Tokyo's air.

We went there.

The burning ghats were as neat as the others. Scarce, ex-



## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

pensive wood was corded in three sizes. Men kept the pyres level, and stoked; men raked the ashes in heaps—and dumped nothing in the Ganges that would have contaminated a reservoir. We watched a procession descend the terraces—stopping, turning and proceeding. The white-plastered mummy of a relative was borne on men's shoulders and their occasional pirouette was to delude demons, in behalf of the deceased. That sad march was escorted by the usual sorrowing stragglers that go to every funeral on earth.

We rowed closer.

In a hot land, every body must be disposed of quickly; the sanctity of a Ganges-side cremation was matched by its practicality. Where, in a tight-packed city, would you bury your dead? What stretch of arable farmland should be sacrificed for a cemetery? How would you carry a cadaver so far? Who'd pay the wagoner? Why not do the cleaner and more sanitary thing: cremate those remains of humanity—that are exactly as abundant as humanity itself?

Chop the wood, just across the river. Carry it, by water, cheaply as you can, to a good spot. Burn the body—and its possible pestilence—saving the precious land for crops a hungry nation required, and sparing the usually impoverished survivors the lasting cost of grave rent, "perpetual care"—and potential epidemic.

I watched carefully.

On the fires, vague shapes of what had been human could be seen but only as things bigger than the logs. To get the necrophile travelogues you'd have to go ashore and spend handfuls of rupees. Then some bribed employee of this open-air crematory might stir—not the fire—but the residue of flesh. Only then would horror become manifest—and photogenic!

The "ghastliness," in sum, was more manufactured than actual: the Hindus were neat about it—till you paid them for messiness.

When we came back to the landing place we met the

## PHILIP WYLIE

mused than they were after their temple-crawl. We five remained awhile on the quai, watching the nearest pilgrims bob and duck in the green water and pour it on their heads, while others, opisthotonoid with zeal, brayed prayers at the now-warming sun.

"It's exactly the same thing," I said to the Browns, "that you Baptists do. For the same reasons."

They looked at me—the boy flushed in fury.

His mother clenched her throat for retort and paused, as if she could not find an equal violence.

But the father, after a startled moment, said, "Damn if you aren't right!"

He began to chuckle.

So the mother and the son remained silent till they, too, could at least smile. And I treasure that man's reply.

He represents something closer to Christianity than the Baptist version. Maybe, he had been truly—even if fleetingly—converted, there on the Ganges. Anyhow, he had a vision hard to come by, in Gary, for all its good Indiana air.

# New Delhi

Max Wylie, my brother—two years younger to the day—graduated from Hamilton College in the late 1920's and, desiring to see the world but lacking means, accepted a job as a teacher of English in Fohrman Christian College, in Lahore, India. For something on the order of three years, he served on the faculty of that missionary institution.

Max loved the Indians. He learned some Hindu, and was often in the homes of his students—village houses and the palaces of maharajas.

In the quarter century that has passed since his teaching years in Lahore, Max never forgot his students. He kept up a desultory correspondence with a number. Not a few went on from Fohrman College to Cambridge, Oxford, the Sorbonne and other seats of learning. Not a few became wealthy; more took over parental empires of trade. Several became importantly associated with the new government, when the British had gone and India was free.

From Max's quondam students, Ricky and I carried letters of introduction to several people in New Delhi; and we found that letters had been written concerning us and our arrival. I had no more than mentioned our name to the woman at the desk of the Hotel Imperial, when evidence of such letters materialized:

Her handsome brown eyes dilated in her caramel-colored countenance. "Mr. Wylie! Philip Wylie?" When I nodded, she cried, "Rajkumari Amrit Kaur has been phoning *incessantly* for you!"

That name meant nothing. But Ricky came to my side and spoke to the clerk. "Of course! It's so nice of Princess Amrit Kaur to phone."

## PHILIP WYLIE

Just then, a man who had been listening from an office recess hurried forward and said urgently, "The Princess' secretary is *again* on the phone, Mr. Wylie."

So—before I registered—I accepted an invitation to lunch with the "Princess."

The standard porter-safari conducted us to our suite. When we were settled and the last turban marched away, I asked, "Who's this 'Princess' somebody?"

"She doesn't use the title any more. But I guess Indians still treasure it. She's Minister of Health. In Nehru's cabinet."

There is no capital comparable to New Delhi in the world. The pink-buff sandstone and simple architecture of its public structures suits the landscape. Majesty is achieved by mass, and by the profligate use of open space around each building, each group of buildings, every monument and each memorial archway. There are vistas in New Delhi where, for a mile or more, nothing can be seen but an open extravaganza of federal property: mere scope implies the immensity of the land. The dusty-rose of stone and sculpturing is a crystallization of the red dust that drifts from the continental plains to the shore of Indo-China. The hue says "India," the pattern says, "Today." New Delhi has routes and room for a next century's traffic—beauty and spaciousness. There is not a sign of slum in miles, or of that middle-class conglomerate—apartments, residences and shops stacked and strung together without reciprocal consideration that is the usual city.

Of course, the part of New Delhi I admired was commenced by the British, who observed (after a couple of centuries) their seat in Calcutta was not near the center of this empire-chunk, and had the climate of wet Hell, to boot. The Indians have continued, in their little time of liberty, the original plan. And I admired only the federal portion of the place: I am an enemy of cities, usually.

The residence of India's Minister of Health had its own compound, set apart, an estate a mile wide and a half

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

course long. We were accosted by a mammoth turban. Told (by example) that in official India, "Princess" was now "Madam." Given a big portal to enter.

The rooms were large and Victorian.

Mme. Amrit Kaur was small, alert, wrinkled, poised and very learned.

Luncheon guests came quietly, one by one, and sat quietly talking till luncheon was served:

A Japanese interested in world peace;

A young English doctor conducting a village experiment in health reform and health education;

One English and one American diplomat,

Us.

Mme. Kaur sat at the head of a table of ambassadorial dimensions. Servants set elegant plates before us and served us a curry from massive silver dishes. With dessert, we were served silver itself: pastry flaked with metal which we ate for the first time. I presume that eating silver is a token of high station or wealth (power, now) which some old mogul introduced; so I wondered if gold taken internally were poisonous, or why we didn't eat ruby dust. Silver has no flavor I could detect, anyhow—and adds but shimmer to frosting. One might as well chew the tinfoil with one's gum.

The meal was delicious—and scarcely noticed, even the edible silver: enthusiasm for the new India was the food they relished:

. . . this "plague spot" was being cleaned up . . . the people in that "dust bowl" would soon have irrigation from the canal driving toward them . . . so many thousands of experts in so many myriad villages were teaching English, reading, writing, better agricultural methods, the culture of new crops, nutrition, baby care . . . and always, *always*—India was learning the principles, meaning and the purpose of democracy and freedom. . . .

I never heard the word used so often, or with more feeling!

## PHILIP WYLIE

tionary as what Jesus *tried* to say, yet one as fresh as atomic energy. . . .

. . . so many dams, power stations, hundreds of miles of paved roads, hospitals, clinics, midwife training schools . . . so many new secondary schools, high schools, colleges . . . so many miles of pipe, drains, sewers, wires, walks, ditches . . . so many power shovels, tons of dynamite, cubic yards of concrete, dynamite factories, cement mills. . . . Earthquake? So many million more man-shovel-hours to clear it . . . and the hell with impediments. . . .

It was like a war: excited logistics.

Progress.

. . . so many millions more people taught to read . . . so many radio towers put up, sets distributed, educational programs beamed on the dung-smoked, dusty Indian air. . . .

. . . so many flies killed, bedbugs, lice, fleas. . . .

. . . so many millions vaccinated, immunized, treated, hospitalized, surgically repaired. . . .

And such Augean chores ahead, with such titanic additional demands . . . !

They reminded me of the Soviets, in the days when the Czar had gone and the liberated Russians had not yet discovered that Marxism would out-Ivan all terrible authority.

I sat at the right of the old lady and, mostly, listened, for every question I asked was fully, brilliantly answered. Mme. Amrit Kaur *knew*. She had spent a lifetime learning—after Gandhi, and with Nehru—learning, because of prison sentences and because of India's hunger and desperation and its unborn magnificence. . . .

A lifetime of *unlearning* to be a princess. . . .

I did not ask our hostess about her immediate problem. As Minister of Health, she was soon to face an angry Parliament. The Ganges had risen that winter and inundated the city water supply filtration beds. When the water receded, infectious hepatitis broke out in the city and two hundred thousand people had

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

had, or were now suffering, that long-lasting illness that sometimes ends in death.

It was after three o'clock when we departed.

In the following days, we read the blow-by-blow account of Mme. Kaur's defense of her administration before Parliament:

The Ganges Flood Control Plan had not yet been authorized by Parliament, she noted.

About two hundred thousand cases of infectious hepatitis had been reported. But, she asked tartly, had the disturbed representatives of India's far-flung provinces observed that the viral strain caused light cases and the fatalities were negligible? She admitted that not every rupee budgeted for the nation's health had been spent on the care and succor of New Delhi hepatitis victims. However, gamma globulin was not to be had—the only effective preventative. No funds for that existed! But did the eminent representatives want exclusive use of Health monies in Delhi, simply because they and their families were residents in the area and directly menaced by this epidemic of minor nature? Even if Parliament used every anna, the *total* funds for India would not halt the sickness. Such monies as she had were being used to halt, in its early stages, an outbreak of cholera in Calcutta. Would Parliament prefer national cholera to local hepatitis?

Was her ministry responsible for Acts of God until a more sophisticated Parliament voted funds for human acts which would modify God's—such as flood control?

She held her own, and more, with the hundreds of alarmed delegates: an old, frail, wise woman! She won a vote of confidence. She went ahead afterward with her mammoth schemes for the welfare of the new republic. Not even a doctor of medicine, Amrit Kaur. Just . . . a princess with a brain who found a Cause, and a need she could learn to help fulfill . . . who found a leader and then *became* a leader—but only after much learning, and the vicissitudes of British imprisonment.

## PHILIP WYLIE

I was proud when, three months later, my alma mater had Rajkumari Amrit Kaur stand on Commencement Day beside one other woman and several eminent scholars, scientists and successful men of affairs—to receive an Honorary Doctorate. The other woman was Helen Hayes. . . .

Ricky and I had made the Agra trip without much expectation. We had not greatly anticipated the postcard-trite Taj. A splendid journey, though. With a Sikh chauffeur we'd ridden the hundred and fifty miles, through the guidebook-advertised novelties. Amazed.

Here, for robins, they had green parrots on the road; for squirrels, monkeys; for Chevrolets, Chevrolets *and* camels, besides that—water buffaloes for Cadillacs—and, coming back, clear in the headlamps, a jackal for . . . whom?

The Taj, we'd thought, would surely be one of those things.

You have to look at Niagara Falls, God-knows-why, and the Taj, we imagined, "likewise": a checkoff line on a list, falling between Red Fort, The, and Akbar, Tomb of.

Ricky didn't say anything. . . .

I sat down on a bench inside the gate.

A student we'd hired to show us Agra respected our silence. The Sikh driver we'd had for some days stayed in the background although I believe he had come in to watch us behold.

The sky was blue: Shiva must have scrubbed the sky. The time was noon. There was no water in the reflecting pools, as they were being cleaned; but perhaps it was just as well. Attention was fixed on nothing but the Taj Mahal.

We had walked through the splendid entrance, contrived so the visitor does not see the tomb until he sees it whole. It hit me the way it has millions of others.

Ricky came to sit beside me on the stone bench. . . .

In the foreground of the Taj stood a bauhinia, a tall orchid tree, every blossom matched to the crimson of the Taj.



## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

spring-blooming explosion of wastrel beauty—rare, yet familiar to us as the pink, ordinary oleanders, ranked beside the long, drained pools.

Here was a lovely deliberate statement of the truth as true in reverse: here man had equaled Nature and affectionately mocked her, using Nature's hardness and heaviness to create an earth-anchored cloud not surpassed in the sky.

I have burst into tears on first reading a poem . . . not Homer's compulsory *Iliad* . . . a poem like, *These, in the day when heaven was falling* . . . on reading

on revelations of what-men-call-God

on seeing a sky

a certain child

on hearing music

occasionally (every week when I was young and maybe once in two years now that I am not)

I've bawled. . . .

I wept as I sat on that bench and looked at the Taj Mahal.

What it "said" took a moment to translate from the apprehension of blood, glands, marrow and organs into words the brain needed.

This, I thought, states the love of man for woman.

Here in the medium of precious stone and marble, the medium of an utmost human skill which clothed a body of alabastrine rock with a rock lace, a man said in the whole of his best idiom:

*Woman.*

And that is one level of the message.

The next says:

*Woman: ergo love.*

There is nothing else to say. This way of saying was never attempted so truly before—let alone so well achieved—in the stony fiber of Mother Earth herself.

There was a letter from Max at the Imperial Hotel.

He wrote that mutual friends Betty and "D." had been

## PHILIP WYLIE

taken a year's leave of absence from their jobs (she is an associate editor and he, assistant to Rex Johnson, Board Chairman of Nationwide Publishing Corporation) to do "something or other for UN in Beirut." Max wasn't sure that the Fosters would be in Lebanon while we were there—but he thought so.

And we hoped so. We like the Fosters. "Doc" wears the grey-flannel suit and is an "exurbanite" besides. But he has more heart than the grey flannel usually covers, more depth, a larger sense of responsibility and a larger empathy. That, of course, was why he had taken leave from the fifth most prosperous magazine and book publishing company in the world to give a year doing "something" for UN in the Near East. Betty was with him; and Betty is as modish, witty, well-educated and knowing as the grey flannel wife—and quite a bit more, too!

I sent a radiogram to Doc. He radioed back an incandescent invitation. So our hope was fulfilled.

Excepting the King Gordons in Tokyo, whom we'd seen briefly, we had not encountered a soul we knew since leaving Hawaii. We were not homesick but we were (if there's such a thing) a little friendsick and the answer from Beirut was heart-warming.

The things we'd planned to do in each country were often left undone, or put off, owing to other things that cropped up: things bearing on the present state of the world. But sometimes we were just tourists.

We toured Old Delhi and visited the refugees from Pakistan—kicked-out Hindus, who live beside crumbling segments of Delhi's ancient wall.

We inspected Kutb-Minar, an Indian Tower of Pisa, but taller, nonleaning, and made of sandstone shaded from orange to red. We saw the Iron Pillar in the ruined courtyard behind the Kutb—a venerable post that never rusts and is said to have been cast from a stainless iron alloy of meteoric origin. It is alleged to be a preventative of and cure for backache! Those

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

who press their spines against the column and wrap their arms around it will never suffer lumbago, sacroiliac, et al. Indian visitors so engaged when we came to the scene were highly amused when one Western pragmatist took a turn. Let it be reported, then, that the curious column doesn't work for Yankees—or doesn't work.

We went to see Gandhi's "tomb"—a huge, low block of concrete, protected by a balustrade and set on a platform, that marks the spot where Gandhi's body was cremated. The number of people who visit it daily must equal the daily world total of people who enter all Woolworth stores! They buy flowers from squatting sellers to put on the slab. A man with a stick pushes the flowers into geometrical designs and as soon as one is complete, he wipes it off to make room for the next floral deluge.

A broad, paved walk leads to the place. As one nears it, shoes must come off. But the flower-disposers use hose to keep the blossom blizzard from blocking traffic. Europeans in that coming-going reverent river check their shoes. For leather is hard to come by in India; it would otherwise be easy to walk off with brogans and abandon cloth sandals. But your socks get soaked.

We inspected the Great Mosque and, for ten rupees, took a look at Mohammed's prayerbook (tattered), a single filament of his hair (auburn), and his footprint—made in the sand as he drank from a spring and later miraculously converted to stone. (Twelve triple A, approx.)

We studied the mysteries of several Hindu temples popular with tourists, and canvassed Delhi's Red Fort. This establishment contains the home, baths and harem of Akbar—who built another such fort in Agra, just in case.

I was by then deeply oppressed with the luxury and splendor, gaud-piled-on-gaud, which the Asiatic few have long enjoyed at the slavish expense of the many.

On recent similar expeditions my thoughts had become comprising to all-out appreciation of grandeur in dome,

## PHILIP WYLIE

gold, and ornament inlaid in precious stone, or gold or in bas relief: decorated-decor, loud as colored feathers on a macaw. Toomuchness annoys most of us.

And above all the other show of Ind, Cathay or Nippon, the uses and pleasures of concubinage, though discernible to me as a youth, have lost, in the endless seeing of their chambers, the savor they once had. But let me not thus suggest I hold, as many of us do, that concubines are in nature Oriental and/or *passée*. (Though why men who say they "take the Bible literally" do not also take concubines they will never be able to explain!) A custom of enjoying more women than one wife continues, to this day, and surely will go on as long as our species.

But to have on hand, continuously, two or three thousand concubines is wasteful. Foolish. Even Casanova, according to my careful estimate, could have brought joy into the heart of a mere half thousand demoiselles approximately once a year in most cases. So Akbar's extra girls would be certain to pine. One is therefore drawn to the theory that a man with a thousand concubines, or thereabouts, was also a man made cuckold far above the average number of times. What mogul would be able, furthermore, to recall a girl's name and face, from one year (or so) to another? I could only assume the sustainers of such realms of enchantresses were compulsively driven toward making love exclusively with strangers.

Now, a word about the part of the Red Fort that was *not* harem:

The structure had just been used for a public reception of India's most-loved Britons: Lord and Lady Mountbatten. So the antique premises were blemished by signs and infinite strings of Christmas-tree lights. I have nothing against Louis Mountbatten or his wife; but I could not help reflecting, as their welcome blackened the press and blocked the streets, that no American could evoke such enthusiasm anywhere outside USA—and even Khrushchev got a thousandfold better hand than our people do, in India.

# the land of Canaan

India is a long way from Miami, Florida. Karachi is a long way, too, and even Beirut is quite a piece, but when the Air France plane curved over the sea I felt a change. To me, it was as if we had come suddenly quite near home, and though the sensation was lost later, that first sight of the Mediterranean established a connection. I knew the rest of the way home—though southern France was the nearest I'd been to Asia Minor, save for one glimpse from Russia.

As Ricky and I had traced our trip in the months of its planning, poring over globes and maps, I'd repeatedly put a finger-of-the-mind on Beirut and told myself: *When you get there, you'll have made it.* The great Pacific would be crossed; Japan, the Orient, Asia behind us—all the unknown places. And here was Lebanon.

The dawn-pasty but grinning faces of Betty and Doc Foster stood out in the crowd at the airport. They emphasized my illusion: *People* from home, old friends. Connection became complete, for a little while.

We hugged each other. Doc helped me swing suitcases into his station wagon. Betty, gay and pretty as ever, launched into an immediate, determined exposition of why we should not use our hotel reservations and be their guests instead.

We hadn't intended to oppose any such proffered hospitality. Twenty thousand miles, even of the best hotels available, gives a good sound to "guest room."

We stood in the Foster's living room looking across French rooftops of an Arab city, and across a harbor at mountains beyond it—drinking genuine American coffee, fresh made by Betty.

## PHILIP WYLIE

"We're glad you two guys are here for a special reason," she said.

And Doc explained. "My boss—Rex Johnson—is due tomorrow. With his wife, Margaret. So——"

"Doc has been worried." Betty took over his worry. "We don't know the Rex Johnsons, socially. Also—we have what you call problems, here in the Near East. Like Arab refugees from Israel. Doc hopes Rex will be willing to scout the situation. After all, we've been on this UN job nearly our year! Doc has definite opinions on problems here—not to say, fears. Doc loves his boss; but he isn't sure how the boss will take to Lebanon. With you two around, it'll help."

Ricky said suddenly to Doc, "You mean we've got *another* refugee tour to go through? I didn't realize there were any here."

"That," Doc answered, "is the point. That's why *I'm here*, in a way. Starting about eight years ago, the Israelis forced nearly a million Arabs out of Palestine. Those people have been refugees ever since—in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, here. And I want Rex to see them. Talk to them. You, too! But it may be hard to get Rex on such a trip. I can't picture him in messy places. Will you help me persuade him? Will you both go along?"

Of course we said we would.

Betty and Ricky stayed in the car.

Rex and I were conducted along mud wallows and cobbles, "streets," that might just have emerged from a flood. Footpaths, really. The car couldn't pass through them.

Doc and the UN official—a refugee Arab—led the way past "houses" where they'd lived for eight years: men and women, teen-agers, little kids, who walked along in our wake, silently, watching us look at them, at their "houses." Hovels with dirt floors and walls made of anything available.

We "inspected" the UN dining facilities, which were the meagerest imaginable. A meal a day there, basic, measured, monotonous. Added calories doled to the old, the ill and the young.

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

young; less to the able-bodied. This is the science of dietitians: to keep millions as close to starving as strong bodies will bear—for economy's sake, the UN's till. There were no fat refugees, no plump ones and no happy ones. Israel, and the United Nations, too, had promised to compensate them for lost homes, property, farms, groves and places of business. But they had had no compensation; just this subsistence at a level of hardship that would be intolerable to most Western people.

Rex and I tramped in the muck, the filth and stench. Finally, we were led into the "headquarters" where an old, old man in missionary-barrel pants and a fez had us seated in kitchen chairs—with the grace of an emir receiving kings. He was mayor of this Slimeville.

The room had a wooden floor, bare walls and no heat. That day, though sunny, was cold: about fifty degrees. Men hastened into the room, bringing boxes to sit on, old chairs, chair bottoms—or nothing: other old men, middle-aged men and young, filing in silently until there were a hundred Arabs, or so. Rex and I hadn't expected this "audience," hadn't been told what to expect; we exchanged glances that said so. Doc sat frowning, abstracted, as if he knew what was coming and had no intention of telling us, or perhaps was not sure and trying, in consequence, to conceal anxiety.

Coffee came.

I thought Rex flinched a little and I felt a squirminess now familiar: this wasn't a place to touch food.

The cups were small and unmatched. The coffee would be thick and sweet, according to *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Nobody said anything while the stuff was poured and passed to the headman, Doc, our UN guide, Rex and me. I knew (and I thought Rex knew) this was the Arab welcome. I picked up my cup and made a half-toasting gesture to the village mayor, who did the same, with no smile.

I sipped. My tongue touched a semisolid in the sweet-sticky brew—something chewy and odd-tasting, an insect, I was

## PHILIP WYLIE

Rex blanched. I saw it. (Our hosts had no place or way, I reflected, to keep food free of infestation.)

I took a new grip on my gagging guts and gulped the rest. To refuse an Arab's coffee, I knew, would insult him.

Rex not only swigged his, maggots and all, but he beamed afterward as if it satisfied his deepest desire.

I assumed our guide from UN would now translate. These strange men in remnants of Arabian clothing that was mixed with castoffs of the Western world—these silent men with eyes as black as tar and hot as fire—they'd said nothing. Surely, they could not speak any language but Arabic.

So I was startled—Rex, also—when one of them began.

"Mr. Johnson and Mr. Wylie," he said, "we are here today, to ask *why* we are here. Why we have been here for eight years. We ask you why the nations of United Nations have not kept their obligation? *Or* Israel." His English was good; but the last word, he made sound obscene. And his voice was furiously accusative: I felt he was charging me, in person, with his years, his misery, his rags, and hunger, his terror, eviction and loss.

When he had put those questions in further detail, he stood waiting.

Doc was watching Rex, and Rex was looking at the Arab with candid perplexity. I knew what Rex was thinking. I *said* it, bluntly:

"For one thing, until the other day, I didn't know there were any Arabs still living in exile because they'd been driven out of their homes by the Israelis. I knew there had been trouble, inside Palestine, years back, and some Arabs had fled. But I assumed they were all re-established in Egypt—or Syria—Jordan—or here in Lebanon. I didn't know there were almost a million of you, still in camps, after eight years."

The man was about to answer, but someone behind him took up the matter—also in excellent English:

"Of *course*, you did not know. And why do you Americans not know the truth about us? The mere *fact* of our existence—if you can call this starved hoenen existence? *Why* not? It is



## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

simple. Your American press—your whole country—is under the thumb of Zion. Jew-controlled! You cannot, you dare not print a word about us. Dare not murmur a word on your radio. Show a picture of us on your TV. You're Jew-cowed!"

"That," I said, "is hooie."

"Then—why don't you know?"

I looked at Rex, whose face was still baffled. "Why don't I know?" I asked him.

Another Arab shouted, "Yes, Mr. Johnson. Mister Big Publishing Man. *Why?*"

Rex fixed his steady blue eyes on the tight-packed mob; it leaned toward us, an arm-length away. Rex, with a quizzical, half-apologetic smile. "I'm like Mr. Wylie. I didn't realize your problem had gone unsolved. But I can assure you this idea that Jews control the American press is ridiculous."

"Prove it," some one muttered. "When you return, publish our story!"

"*Look,*" I broke in, "Americans are self-satisfied, like all successful people. They don't know about you simply because they're too busy with themselves to study all the injustice and wretchedness in the world today. As for Jews, in America I've been known all my life as a man who detests race prejudice. But that includes anti-Semitism. I think I can say that no living American author has attacked anti-Semitism and anti-Semites harder than I. I am a friend of all Jews in that way—as I am of all *people*, the same way—as well as a close, personal friend of several Jews!"

A youngish, good-looking man sneered, "Ah! Then *that's* it. Friend of Jews!" He spat on the floor at my feet.

I dislike people spitting on, at, or around me. But I kept my temper. "I, myself, always thought the Zionist idea was wrong and always said so. I think it's wrong for any people to try to recreate a nation that has been scattered, nonexistent, for more than a millennium. I think all such nationalism is crazy. I think people should try to come together—not to get farther apart, in little bothead nations. I thought it was wrong to try to build

## PHILIP WYLIE

'Israel,' in a land that had been Arab so long. I thought it was a mistake to try to create a modern, mechanized culture, in a desert. I felt sad and bitter about the homeless remnants of Jewish people left by Hitler—and I detested Nazism—but I did not believe that it made sense to carve out a hunk of Palestine and call it a homeland, to maintain it forcibly and artificially, and to resettle Jewish refugees there. I thought the nations of the world should open their doors to those refugees. And I *said* all that, in print, in America."

"In the American press?"

"Yes. Often. And in books."

There was a pause, now, while the gist was murmuringly translated for some of the crowd who did not understand English.

Finally, the man who had spat spoke again, with the utmost belligerence: "What are you going to do for us now, then? When will you get our homes back for us? This, you *must* do."

"Why 'must' we?" I asked.

That question was loudly translated. The room seemed to swell, with a rage the sleazy walls could hardly hold.

Another Arab said in a menacing tone, "If you do not act soon, you treacherous, lying white people, we have our answer! *Russia* will give the Arabs arms. Then Arabs will hurl the Israelis into the sea."

When a murderous murmur died away, I said, "Okay. You're Moslems. I've been all over Russia. I know what happens to your belief, your mosques, your Mohammed, your Koran in Communist countries. If you accept Red arms, you'll become Red slaves. Your religion will be a thing for two hundred million Slavs, and six hundred million Chinese, to spit on. So—go ahead! *Take* Russian arms—drive the Israelis into the sea—and commit suicide. Do you really imagine you can scare *Americans* by shaking Russia at them?"

That further enraged them, of course.

It occurred to me then that there might be a limit to their self-restraint. I could see our UN guide from the

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

was tugging his beard and staring at his tabletop, panting a little, mouth awry. But I was angry, also. I went on. "Tell me this, you men: Why do you just sit here for eight long years, doing nothing, taking a dole, living like pigs? Why not do something, *yourselves*, for your families?"

Someone roared, "We sit here till we get our homes back."

"Suppose you *never* do?" I said. . . .

I knew they were furious—I meant them to be—and I kept on talking. "My ancestors were driven from *their* homes by religious persecution, by killing and massacre. *They* had to go thousands of miles, across the Atlantic ocean, to get away. They built log cabins in a wilderness. And they *never got back home*. They couldn't go back. What they helped start is, today, the United States of America. So—when I ask you what you'll do, if you never get your lands and homes, I am not just tormenting you. I am an American, whose ancestors suffered more grievously than you are suffering, for the same reasons; and who could not regain home or their rights in a century of bloodshed. In those days, there wasn't a UN wet nurse. So my people went to work and helped create the most powerful nation in human history."

That was translated around—and the violence ebbed from them. They thought of America as primarily responsible for their woes because America has the most money and the most influence. They had never thought of the American people as rising from, and above, circumstances similar to their own. . . .

No longer angry since I had put across my point, I went on a bit: "If I were you refugee guys, I would write off the injustice, get off my butt and go out in this part of the world—your Arab part—and try to make it into something more than a backward, beat-up camel pasture. My own ancestors did exactly that. And in your place, I think I could, and I think I would. I'd try to outcivilize and outproduce Israel, not to wreck it. For if you managed, you'd be home, all right—not squatting in a dump like this, which you've made into a shambles, your-

## PHILIP WYLIE

That was something they didn't want to hear because it emphasized an obvious fact: vengeance was their present motive for living. Their very acceptance of squalor stoked that vengeance even while it degraded them.

True, there were not enough jobs, not enough funds, not enough opportunities in the Arab world for the swift assimilation of all these refugees. But myriads *had* been assimilated. And many of the million still in camps were not even trying to improve their conditions. They tried instead to compensate for their flaccid bellies by swelling their hearts with hate. It was plain. And there was not much else to say to them.

When that "meeting" broke up, we went to see the wretched living quarters of individuals in the crowd.

Afterward, we visited two more refugee villages, one occupied by Bedouins and one by Roman Catholic Arab converts. The first, where I all but stirred up an international incident, was by far the filthiest and most impoverished. The third one, the Christian village, by comparison, was like a poor suburb. The Christian Arabs, moreover, were at work—some taking part in the Lebanese culture, others schooling themselves to live in the world beyond. They had almost abandoned hope of repatriation, if not bitterness about their exile.

Two more cantonments. And two times more we drank the coffee.

I remember Rex's whispered, "Oh . . . no!" when the third serving was pressed upon us. But he drank it.

We also sampled their bread at a community bakery; we looked into pitifully ill-equipped schools, woodworking shops, and dressmaking rooms—where women patched over patches, or embroidered to earn a little money.

Thousands of children had been born in the scrofulous, penned-up environment. And I noticed in the first two camps that there was not a toy. The kids used stones for marbles, and billets of wood for balls.

When that long, weary day of rage, grief—and reluctant amity—at last was done, when the car started back toward

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

Beirut, Betty and Ricky compared notes with Rex and me. They had made separate visits and held separate conversations, part of the time.

We agreed that the refugee situation was shameful, agreed that it was a real and justified source of Arab rage against the West, and, of course, against the Jews of Israel.

"But," Ricky said, "not all these refugees were thrown out by Israelis. Quite a few were promised by their own Arab states that if they'd migrate from Palestine for a while they would eventually be returned or given equivalent lands and homes. The Arab states welched on those promises. So a lot of refugees live in these camps because their own people betrayed them."

Doc had said almost nothing all day, letting Rex and me and the Arabs and their violence and verminous near-starvation talk. Now he spoke quietly. "Some of the people you saw, some of the worst-housed and worst-fed, are actually better off here than they ever were in Palestine. Not a great many—but some. And most of them, we think, if they did get a chance to go back wouldn't take it. But they'd leave the refugee camps. They'd have won their point. They'd settle in the Arab countries, in that case. Hardly one in a hundred families would actually go back, we feel. They want *moral* justice. And they want restitution for what was taken from them—which they've been promised and never received. But they don't actually yearn for the home they demand. The Israelis claim they could not re-assimilate all of them, which is true. But they'd never have to."

When Rex came back to the States, various magazines in the Nationwide group published the facts about the million Arab refugees, with pictures: the very truths the Arabs claimed would never appear in the American press, owing to "Jewish control."

I hope Rex saw to it that those various articles and features got back to the villages in Lebanon—and all other refugee villages—to scotch the deeply believed notion that America's press is censored by, or slanted in favor of, Jews. I wish Rex,

## PHILIP WYLIE

idiots of earth from their paranoid talk of a "secret Jewish conspiracy," too. It is as nonexistent as Atlantis, but as credulously believed in, by some Americans, as little men from Mars.

Some days later, at a luncheon given by Ambassador and Mrs. Donald Heath, we listened to a very skillful exposition of the tangled politics of the Middle East. We met Charles Malik, there, and he left his own dinner party one night to spend some hours with us. But first. . . .

The fascinating foods were consumed and the more fascinating talk was interrupted. The Ambassador and I had happened to move apart from the other guests. We sipped a liqueur together, and discussed one or two matters left incompleated at the table.

"You seem to know a great deal," he said presently, "about the philosophy and psychology of the Soviets. And about Russia, itself. How did you learn?"

"First I read," I answered. "And I listened to several friends who went there—so-called liberal intellectuals, mostly. That was in the early Thirties. Finally, I decided I had to see for myself. Eyewitness accounts were very contradictory. I was sure some were prejudiced—or 'loaded'—and others, uninformed. I took along my kid brother, Ted Wylie—half-brother, actually—one summer. It was the only year that they allowed tourists to go wherever they chose. Ted and I soon jumped the rails of a 'planned tour.' We bought our own tickets—air, rail, water, bus. Went where we pleased and that meant to a lot of places journalists didn't bother to inspect and most liberal-intellectuals never heard of. We ploughed through Russia, from Leningrad to Baku and came out from Shepetovki.

"In Tiflis, we let it be known that what we'd seen was appalling to us, that we were itching to get home to tell the world. After that—the GPU tagged us everywhere. Once, we were in a bus accident that we thought might have been rigged. We became the only passengers aboard, as people got off at various stops. The bus skidded over a cliff but Ted and I jumped out

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

I thought I might be boring the Ambassador. He had twenty other guests, too. But as I'd talked, a strange, tense look came in his eyes. "And then?" Mr. Heath asked.

"I came down with some never-diagnosed combination of diseases, in Poland. One was probably cholera. My kid brother didn't catch any of them. But early one morning when I was presumably a lost citizen, Ted went to his room after a dinner and a long evening with some of our embassy people. I'd made him go out. He'd sat five nights and days with me. I had a nurse, by then. And a few minutes after he entered his hotel room, adjacent to mine, he was found dead on the pavement, five storeys below." I thought back a moment:

"Our consul and our Embassy thought it was the work of Soviet agents. We had seen too much—and we were writers. They came over at once. They were swell to me. Though they did ask a lot of questions, of a man supposed by the Polish doctors to be on the way out, right behind Ted. There never was any proof Ted was murdered. After that—after a year spent in recovery, I was partly paralyzed for months—I really studied Communism. I had a personal motive, besides my original, intellectual reasons, and humane reasons."

Ambassador Heath had been waiting for me to finish. "I remember that," he said.

"Remember! *You* remember. . . !"

"I'd been Ambassador to Poland, shortly before 1936. Had another post in Central Europe then. But all the American Embassies in Central Europe were indignant about it: two young Americans came out of Russia with a lot of information. One got sick, was apparently dying of some unknown disease. The other—was killed."

I was stupefied. And there was no adequate way to make Ambassador Heath realize how much this meant to me. I tried my best:

"I've often told the story. Even written it. But most people thought, in 1936, and afterward, that I'd exaggerated my sickness, and my brother was either drunk and fell from the win-

## PHILIP WYLIE

"We didn't think so," the Ambassador answered grimly. "I'd forgotten your names, you understand. I've forgotten some of the details, too—but . . ."

We talked urgently, then. For I never forget at all . . . !

Never forget the massive misery of Sovietland. The degradation of humanity. The evidence of violence and terror and torture. Or my growing rage, and Ted's. . . .

Never forget the night in Tiflis when, amidst a score of tourists and Russians, we were asked "what we thought of the USSR." Ted and I let loose. Documented tirade. . . .

I won't forget how the GPU men followed us afterward, or how we mocked them (since they pretended not to understand English). We'd describe them within their hearing, using the most insulting terms we could imagine—to watch their color rise. Or fade. But they went on, in relays, tagging us and listening to us, and pretending, *still*, they didn't know a word of English.

I won't forget the night in Odessa. We were ready to take our last train-ride in Russia—to Poland. And God, how happy to be leaving! A bottle of Scotch was offered for sale by the hotel bar-keep. We'd drunk little: the beer was bad, the vodka worse. So we bought the Johnnie Walker and split it with two Americans.

The next morning, we woke in a car of a train occupied by Red Army soldiers only. We had hangover thirsts, but there wasn't a drop of water on the train. Our car was shoved on a siding. The troops marched away. Ted and I sat alone, all day, in the heat of some uncultivated, uninhabited part of the Ukraine. We were still too stupid to be scared. Just *thirsty*. When, at last, a train picked up our car we appealed with parched mouths for "voda." The trainman brought us water, a carafe of it. The stuff looked brownish, tasted odd, but we drank it all.

Five days later, in Warsaw, I fell hideously ill. From that water? If so, Ted was immune to the bacteria it had contained. But such immunity is not rare.



## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

I remember the fever, the puking, the odd diarrhea, the crawling on hands and knees to the toilet, Ted helping. I remember the big purple blotches that came out on me, the onset of paralysis, the pain. I remember that, often, I could *not* remember.

Some days after that, I was continually conscious again—and agonized. The Polish specialist finally told me one afternoon (in voluble, solemn French) I would be dead in a few more days.

My brother Ted entered his room late that hot night, opened French windows that gave on a narrow balcony, and plunged into the street. Pushed out, our people in Warsaw thought, by an agent hidden in his closet: a familiar Soviet gambit. Liquidate your enemy in a country outside Russia; leave no proof of murder; escape while he falls. The old open-window trick.

I sent Ted's body to Gdynia—Warsaw was Catholic, then, and had no crematory. And I sent Ted's ashes home.

For a month after that, I lay paralyzed in one arm and one leg, my fever abating slowly as ankylosis and atrophy progressed. I was often in near delirium owing to chronic agony—and grief. A guard was set at my door to prevent any further acts of "agents."

I remember! Who wouldn't?

I was moved to Paris by stretcher and wagon-lit. A French physician named Fernand Layani started my long healing. . . .

In more months, I returned to Manhattan and continued hospitalization. But little by little, the use of my joints was brought back. The debilities that followed cholera (if it was that) and plague (if it was that, also, as some doctors thought) diminished.

I went to work in Hollywood, finally. We needed money. But the heart was out of me. Ted was dead. Murdered. He certainly had not killed himself and he was known not to have been drunk.

My family was crushed by the tragedy. Loss of the brightest

## PHILIP WYLIE

the most vehement and imaginative, the young Wylie who—at twenty-three—had published his own first novel, ghostwritten a great arctic book, gone abroad the first time to see the Soviet Terror close to. And he had seen it. All.

*For twenty years*, I carried the recollection of that Red hegira, the memory of humanity-in-horror, and my private sorrow—the unprovable murder of a young brother, along with my own remembered agony and near death.

I had become *afraid* to travel and stayed afraid for twenty years. Bermuda, perhaps. Havana. No farther! I could sweat, wide-awake a whole night, just imagining being in Europe. The phobia consumed me. *Stay home. Be safe.* It is one of the reasons for my interest in psychological theory, one reason for prolonged analysis. And it was *the* reason Ricky always wistfully said to travelers, “I’ve never been anywhere.”

*I wouldn’t take Ricky anywhere.* Not “anywhere” far from USA. My private horror would dig in, resisting, panting, shaking, perspiring—if we even *idly* considered going to Paris “someday.” I was sick with it.

But now I stood, most of the planet behind me, freed of fear. Across the room, in the lovely dress she’d bought for “occasions,” was Ricky, who had never been “anywhere,” because of my fear. Ricky smiling, talking eagerly and eagerly listening—in the midst of some of the most informed and urgent lovers-of-liberty on this earth. In *Beirut*, in *Lebanon*—which used to be part of the Land of Canaan and is far, far from Miami.

Before me stood an ambassador who gravely drained his liqueur glass.

“Did you write about Russia?”

“Certainly. Beginning in 1937, when I could move my right arm again. And ever since. The *Daily Worker* somehow assumed Admiral Wiley was my father in those days and they used to review what I wrote about Russia with the same opening phrase: ‘Philip Wiley, the snot-nosed son of Admiral Wiley . . .’”

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

He grinned briefly. "I *do* remember," he said then and almost to himself: "We couldn't do *anything*. It was always that way: no evidence. Just somebody who'd learned too much about the Soviets and mysteriously became the victim of an odd, fatal disease. Or an accident. Became *dead*. We would be furious at the Embassies—and impotent."

His penetrating eyes flashed, and his grim-shut jaw grated audibly. "You sure learned Communism the hard way."

Before he returned to his other guests, he added, "But you sure did *learn* it. I wish all Americans understood it as well because, then, the danger *they'll* have to learn it, *the hard way*, would not exist." For an instant, he looked out through a great window of the Embassy drawing room, looked out at the walls of Beirut, brown-gold in the sunny, cool afternoon. His expression was that of a man seeing legions of foes storming outer walls. A man who had foreseen the attack, a long time; and one who'd given ten thousand warnings. Ten thousand alarms unheeded by his now-beleagured countrymen. He shrugged, turned, stopped and said over his shoulder, "I enjoy seeing an American like you, once in a while—somebody from home who realizes what we face here. And everywhere. And I'm sorry about your brother. But in 1936 we didn't know quite enough to warn crazy young Americans like you that the more Russia you saw, the less talking you should do—till you got well away. *Baiting* Ogpu men. Good Lord!"

We shook hands hard, when Ricky and I departed.

He said, "Keep writing!"

I said, "Keep watching!"

The Fosters gave a cocktail party just before the Rex Johnsons and Ricky and I departed for Istanbul. It was a large and lively party. I suppose the people were as "cosmopolitan" as any guests among which ever we were numbered. Almost all of them spoke some English; but I was glad my French remained voluble and that I knew some German.

## PHILIP WYLIE

with Rex and me, leaving his own dinner guests; it was the only remaining chance for the three of us to be together.

In remembering the evening now, I hesitate to set down my impressions of Malik. This man is often called the "foremost spokesman for the Middle East," often introduced after a sotto voce aside: "the great *Christian Arab*, you know." He is a husky man, a gray man, who wore a gray suit that night. He has a large, shagged, gray head; he smiles often and speaks softly. In repose, and only then, deep seams in his countenance tell how his character was made: of unaccountable disappointments transcended each in turn by his hope.

Diplomacy, charm, courtesy, conversational brilliance—they are common attributes. Worldliness (or sophistication) is mandatory in the "international set." But is courage? Wisdom? Kindness? Patience? Erudition? He was—once—a mathematics teacher, a physics instructor and a professor of philosophy. He earned his Ph.D. at Harvard. He has been Lebanese delegate to the United Nations and now heads the American University of Beirut—among other things. He embodied once again my meaning of "man" in man's best shape.

Dr. Malik cheerfully made the rounds of the by-now exuberant stay-lates, the people who either dine customarily on canapés and liquid carbohydrate or, like Russians, take dinner after midnight. Then he found a reasonably quiet corner, helped assemble chairs and sat down tiredly with Rex and me.

Dr. Malik and Rex began to talk.

That night I was exhausted. Packing lay ahead, before sleep and an early plane departure. The cocktails I'd had earlier had worn off and left me fretful, vaguely disquiet, reluctant to commune with anybody.

The first significant remark directed at me by Dr. Malik not only demanded a mental effort I did not want to make but contained a query I felt he could answer better than I—one with a derogatory implication, too! "Mr. Wylie," he said gravely, "there's one thing I forever struggle vainly to ascertain: the basic policy of the West. What is it?"

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

"What do you mean," I answered, almost rudely, "by the West? You're talking, after all, to an American."

"I mean, of course, *The West*: the nations led by your own."

"Then," I answered, "the word 'policy' is wrong. You've lived in America. You surely realize that the American people do not for a moment consider themselves part of Europe, leaders of any Occidental Co-Prosperity Sphere?"

He grinned feebly.

I went on: "We think—the very great majority of us—that Europe is a distant group of unintelligent, quite backward, mercenary, dependent nations whose people are not even poor relations, but parasites, or, at best, remoras."

"I beg your pardon?"

"It's a fish with a sucking disk on its noodle. It clamps onto bigger fishes, rides free and, when the big fish makes a kill, casts off and free-loads."

"Oh! Yes. *Remora*. Good! The so-called isolationist viewpoint of some Americans, I know. But——"

"——but I don't mean isolationists. I refer to the *national* American subconscious, the shape of American instinct, in this Year of Grace. To almost every living American, Dr. Malik, 'The West,' unless first *differently* defined, means the American West, where young men were once abjured to go."

Rex, I thought, tried to mend my poor manners. "Mr. Wylie is just trying to explain that if you say 'The West' to the average New Englander, or New Yorker, he thinks of Ohio, say. To an Ohioan, the phrase means—maybe—Nebraska. In Nebraska, 'The West' is Wyoming. And so on, right through California, where there isn't any 'wester West.' To Californians, The West means California and adjacent states."

Dr. Malik moved his large body, uncomfortably. "I fear you both still do not get my meaning. Of course, I understand the local use of the term. But I keep trying to perceive how the relationships of the Western powers are meshed to create a policy."

## PHILIP WYLIE

to get mine. The policies of USA, in the long run and such as they are, represent a consensus of the American will, slightly sifted through the colander of politics, and occasionally given a new direction by some Wilson or Roosevelt—a direction invariably turned *back again* if it fails to coincide with America's collective will, or wants, wishes—or whatever."

He was frowning. "I still fail . . . ?"

"What I mean is this: Americans do not, and perhaps will not for a long time, consider for one instant that they have *mandatory policy ties* with Europe, Canada, Latin America or any other country! We think of ourselves as Americans—exclusively: a self-determined nation with no necessary foreign ties, duties, imperatives, unshatterable alliances, and so on."

"But . . . !"

"There *is* no but, Doctor. Believe me. We may feel that we ought to do something *for*—or *about*—Europe. Or a European nation. Or any other. We do feel that we go over and win wars they stupidly got into—win for the right side. We lend and give Europe money. We play along with them, suffer for, or fight for them, when it suits us. Some Americans know Europe depends utterly on us, now. Of those, most think of that dependency wholly in economic and military terms. For instance, a few of us realize that if the tin and rubber in Malaya fall to the Red Chinese, or if the oil, here in Arabia, is Sovietized, it'll wreck the thin British economy and put sixty-odd million Britishers—along with the French—on an American dole. *Some* Americans are aware of *that* sort of dependency. Some know only a hydrogen-muscled, big-area nation can even challenge the Reds with effective bluff. *Most* Americans aren't aware of the sober truth of the Atomic Age or of what all-out war means. Of those, however, who know Europe exists, all will freely moralize about what England, France, West Germany, Pakistan or *anybody* 'ought' to do, in a given situation. We Americans currently don't yet know, or refuse to face, all realities inimical to our self-sufficient dream. That's a kind of ignorant but well-wishing vanity. Mr. Dulles—who definitely *does* know Europe exists

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

often is just such a moralizer. Intellectually, we Americans have *no* policy shared with 'The West' because we don't think about ourselves as a part of it—in the way you do, and everybody in Asia does."

Dr. Malik turned and spoke to Rex, who was smiling—embarrassedly, I thought. "Surely a hundred and seventy-five million people, the world's most extensively educated, cannot take so provincial a view!"

"I think," Rex replied, "Phil has it about right. Of course, when the chips are down . . ." He stopped, and his smile diminished.

"That's different," I went on. "American policy is not describable and it can't be written out. It cannot be shared in its present form. But it isn't *exactly* the slaphappy opportunism it usually seems. For, when our policy requires *acts*, Americans do act. They act, however, not from prior written policy but from an assorted set of deeply unconscious instincts, traditions, ideals, hunches——"

"Generous," Dr. Malik nodded. "Brave. Not self-seeking in any colonial sense, but, rather, vastly the contrary . . . !"

"Wonderful people," I agreed, "in action. But as for policy—children. Maybe we don't need it so long as we have the instincts of free, self-determined men."

Dr. Malik was disturbed. "I agree, you are capable of splendid acts. History has no parallel for your generosity to others, or your fury when, as Mr. Johnson says, 'the chips are down.' But it will be perhaps too late to act when America finally sees the *Communist* chips have already been put down! How can America—if she shares no policy with what I call The West—be led to act, in time, if she sees no chips down? No war going on? No definitive crisis? Just penetration, the forward-moving curtain, subjugation, violence?"

"We started, once," I answered. "Korea."

The Arab spoke rapidly. "Ah, but there *was* a chip down: North Korea invaded by Communist-trained, Chinese-led Red

## PHILIP WYLIE

seem Mr. Truman changed your American policy-by-instinct. As you put it. The American people reversed his effort and walked away from Korea without victory. I would say, if you play bridge, they reneged."

"I play bridge. And America reneged on a fight—for the first time in her history." I tried to explain in some other way: "We are so much America, so much alone, and we feel so self-centered and remote, that what I call the collective instinct failed to carry through in Korea. You see, our attitude toward Russia—though ambivalent—finally gave us a dominating urge to pull out of Korea, not to win."

"Ambivalent?"

"Again—*unconscious*. We Americans, most of us, consciously assume that we can lick the Soviets and Red Chinese, if we must. We were brought up to believe we could lick anybody—or everybody put together. But *unconsciously* it's different. A great many, if not most, plain, ordinary Americans assume, without realizing it, that any next all-out war will simply destroy America—and probably everybody else."

"Why do you think they believe *that*, even 'unconsciously'?"

"Because I'm quite sure that Americans have faced such unpreparedness, at the start of the two World Wars, that if they had an instinctual feeling they *could* survive a Third, they'd prepare themselves. Civil Defense, I mean. But they don't and won't. Why? Because they 'know'—in a region beyond knowledge—it's ridiculous to try. Hopeless. If 'there is no defense,' there's no civil defense."

He turned bewilderedly to Rex, who shrugged. "Phil writes—and talks—from a psychological viewpoint. That's his personal explanation. But I don't think it should be underestimated, Dr. Malik. Phil's been attached to the Federal Civil Defense Administration, as an expert consultant, under Truman and Eisenhower. He has a very high clearance in this whole atomic show. And the simple facts are that atomic weapons do exist, Russia has plenty, and we in the United States don't make even a pretense of getting our cities ready for H-bombs. It doesn't



## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

After a moment of reflection, the Arab leader went back to the original topic. "And, Mr. Wylie, you believe that Americans feel free to act, in your words, 'on their own,' without regard to the *other* Western powers?"

"Without regard to anybody! We will act with, for or against England, or France or Ecuador—as Americans. We'll act from what *I* feel to be instinct. But how do you make Americans, right now, realize that, once again, the chips are down, and their fate is at stake? How do you arouse their really wonderful instincts and start USA working out *effective* countermeasures against the Red religion? That's something *else*."

The talk went on in that vein for some time. And when Dr. Malik went home I felt chagrined. He had wanted a blazing but documented description of what instinct, once awakened, would lead free men to do about the enslaving slave people. And I'd just shot off an empty mouth.

Months later, in New York, I showed Doc Foster all that I've written about the Middle East except the foregoing. Doc read it with assent. "But why," he asked, as he finished, "did you leave out that terrific insight you gave Charles Malik, at our party?"

"Insight! All I did was argue with the guy! I was too bushed to do more than bicker."

Doc's reaction astonished me. "Man, don't you know Malik has been quoting you—and explaining what you explained to him—all up and down the Arab world ever since that night? Don't you realize that this very day, after what you taught him, Malik is perhaps the only big shot in the Near East who can say, 'I've been telling you for months Americans consider themselves independent of "The West"! Now you can see that they are.' He discovered that freedom does something to human instinct. Something American—and *swell*. Put it in the book."

So I put it in. . . .

## PHILIP WYLIE

good Dutch breakfast (and flying over beleaguered Cyprus), I began talking to Ricky about Rex.

Most of his "toughness," I said, was the kind that represents courage. More novels, I went on, should be written about such men: men who headed great corporations, who had great wealth, but were not Babbits, pirates, "self-made boors"—not the villains monotonously pilloried by American authors.

"Look at the way Rex stood up to those Arabs! Shoulder to shoulder with me, on the straight, hard grounds of freedom. I know he never did a filth-wade like that refugee tour: he said so. But he helped me bait them, which was necessary. He didn't bat an eye."

"Aren't you getting yourself, and Rex, on a phoney bandwagon? After all, the refugees *live* there. We could look—and go home and wash!"

"That isn't the point. In the liberal-intellectual view, Rex Johnson would only peer from a limousine window at such a place—if that! *No* big businessman would spend the weeks Rex has, doing what he and his wife have done to learn the truth. To learn it on the scene. But writers are *supposed* to scout hellholes. I'm trying to talk about men like Rex from the American literary standpoint. Does Faulkner or Ernest or Buck—or did Red Lewis—ever portray one American businessman with the will and the plain guts to—Well, even to go on calmly drinking cup after cup of coffee that's full of dead roaches or maggots or some damned larvae!"

"*Roaches? Maggots?*" Ricky seemed startled. "You mean those little lumps in the village coffee?"

"You and Margaret choked on a few?"

"Certainly! Those weren't *bugs*. They were coriander seeds."

I looked at Cyprus for a while. . . .

Still. If you think they're bugs, it amounts to the same thing. . . .

# homeward and bound

In Istanbul we queued up at the airport for customs. Rex Johnson was paged. A lean young American began to talk with Rex. I was surprised when we were paged next—and the young man introduced himself as head of USIS in Istanbul. His name was Evans Bailey. “Would you like,” he asked, “to take a boat trip up the Bosphorus, to the Black Sea, tomorrow morning?”

It was one thing we’d hoped to do. . . .

The next day, with Evans and his wife, a Navy Commander and his wife, the Johnsons, and a Turkish skipper, we assembled at the dock to board a small boat. It was bitter cold and a strong wind blew, and the sun was a pale, lemon disappointment.

We saw the Bosphorus.

When the strait opened into the Black Sea I asked for a chance to spit in Communist water. The Commander and I had sat in the open stern cockpit, much of the way, and I’d told him about my Soviet hegira. So he gave the Turkish skipper orders and we went out a ways.

It was not drink that inspired the childish ceremony—for I hadn’t taken any—but partly an inward exuberance over the fact that, after twenty years, I’d overcome my travel dread that had its origin hereabouts—and partly, I felt Ted would have enjoyed having me spit in that Red-dominated Black Sea. Among his last days were five we steamed there, on a Soviet boat that also carried a deckload of three thousand unsheltered, pest-ridden, hungry, toiletless, vomiting, bedless citizens of the proud

## PHILIP WYLIE

faces, were manhandled by Red soldiers, on board just to do that. It was part of my long remembering—Ted's short one—and I spit, as a wreath for him.

It grew colder, the following day.

The publisher of a Turkish newspaper gave Ricky and me a luncheon. Then his wife took us for a long inspection of museums. We saw the government's collection of Chinese porcelains and of gold and silver plate, presumably the world's best. Our hostess also arranged to have the harem especially opened for us. So we trekked more miles past still-brilliant tiled walls and faded tapestries and rugs, looking at beds where one sultan after another made evening rounds of beauties for whom the farthest reaches of Islam were scoured by discerning agents.

Everywhere it was ice cold. Indoors the cold seemed more penetrating than out. Two or three times I left the ladies to their enchantment with goldwork and porcelain, and stood against a wall where weak sunshine fell, beating myself with my arms, trying to get warmth into my stiff muscles. . . .

That night Ricky was sick. We took her temperature: 102°. I got in touch with Evans Bailey who summoned a doctor.

She had a cold, the doctor said.

No wonder!

I could hardly bear to consider going to one more place or looking at one more sight. But Evans Bailey had been kind to us. I could not refuse his urgent invitations to visit the United States Information Center, of which he had charge. And I went after dark, colder and tired than ever.

A visual display of forestry conservation was being carpentered noisily in the lobby of the Information building. Upstairs, an exhibit of abstract painting by Turks had attracted several dozen interested citizens. In the library, stood a framed wall-board on both sides of which were exhibits of my writing!

That was what Evans had wanted me to see.

He introduced me to the Turkish girls who had assembled the collection from files of magazines. There was "The Red

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

forgotten I'd written—a "letter to the editor" of the then "Saturday Review of Literature" defending Carl Jung against unjustified charges of Fascism, other articles in the "Saturday Evening Post," "Cosmopolitan," "Redbook." And one book—a light love story, a magazine serial later published between hard covers. The proud and pretty librarians brought pen and ink and had me autograph that book: they'd been excited to know that a live American author whose works were familiar to them was in the city. Their pleasure at my visit was inordinate. So was my amazement.

While I signed the book, Evans said, "Unfortunately, most of your books—being critical, at least in part—are taboo for our use."

I did not ask why. I already knew. Our information policy abroad is as disastrous as many other policies.

A committee appointed by Congress selects the material used: novels and non-fiction are on the booster side. Once, that didn't hold true. But certain McCarthy appointees went through America's libraries abroad, and labeled "Communist" those books that expressed opinions contrary to their biases.

Five thousand people a month come into our Istanbul center to read American books and periodicals. Many are exclusively interested in technical information. A wing of the library is devoted to such books. But ever since the general reading files were censored, the Turks—like other nationals all over the world—have concluded that USA is *not* a free country with a free press, but a nation with a censorship like Russia's.

The use of censorship in that, or any comparable fashion, is tyranny. Its intent is a sort of brainwash. So, to impartial outsiders—like Turks, Asians, Europeans—the committee appointed by America's Congress to "watch" material sent to our foreign Information Centers acts exactly like any Communist committee. The McCarthy style of mind is incapable of seeing that fact, for, if it saw, it would also see its attack on Communism misses its aim, but savagely damages the ramparts of

## PHILIP WYLIE

The "information" that a censored USIS is actually giving the world is that, insofar as liberty is concerned, there's no choice between Democracy and Communism. Both lie. And how can a foreigner tell that the Soviet lies systemically, purposefully and cleverly for its own ends, while America "lies" merely from hysteria?

"There *is* a difference," I said to Evans. "Our press is free at home."

He sighed. "Censorship is censorship—internal or external. The Commies are forever putting their best foot forward—that's their game and everybody knows it. Now, we're playing the same game. Yet the only game we could *usefully* play in the world would be the good old game of freedom. Phil, we're losing the people who could be on our side, who want to be and long to be—because our side *isn't* the side of complete liberty, any more! After the war, the United States was the hope of the world. With the atomic bomb, the world *had* to have hope. But now . . ."

I went back into the cold night. Men like Evans Bailey—all over the earth—were fighting for their country and their country was holding their arms!

Today we Americans are offering mankind not freedom but a worn-out "moral authority." At home, we are manifesting a mighty resurgence of old-time religion. We are closing in on liberty to protect an old order of belief which, truly, no longer exists.

My cab had stopped. Tiredly, I opened my eyes.

Ricky was reading in bed—and her fever had risen. She wouldn't eat.

The doctor came again, shot pencillin into her and told her she could travel in the morning if her fever diminished.

I was very worried. But I made arrangements.

In the morning, miserable but gallant, Ricky reported her fever had all but disappeared.

I'd packed the night before.

We took a slow bus through occasional swirls of snow to the

## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

airport. On the way, the bus ran out of gas and we waited a cold half hour while the driver strolled back along frozen earth to a pump.

We'd long looked forward to the flight, hoping to be able to see the Aegean below, and interested in what would be our first trip on a turboprop plane. But the view was occluded.

Soon after we took off a series of violent chills shook me. They lasted all the way to the airport at Piraeus and I forgot to notice the turboprops.

The hotel was quiet. Ricky tried to bolster herself for luncheon, with two cocktails; she managed to sit in the dining room and make a pretense of eating. But her fever was high again, and she went to bed—in a rather small, dingy room which gave us a view of a bleak, interior court.

I went out to buy, if possible, some magazines, cigarettes, and a few items needed for Ricky's comfort.

When I returned, I took my temperature. It was 103°.

We had flu, in Athens. . . .

After five days and nights of fever, after canceling our booking to Rome and our hard-to-get hotel reservation, we finally felt well enough to eat in the dining room. On the day after that, feeble and shaky, we covered as much of Athens as we could—and, stopping often for breath, we climbed up on the Acropolis and lived, for a couple of intoxicated hours, that dream of all earnest kids who ever studied Ancient History.

The wheels of one more plane touched down. One more stewardess waited till one more door opened. Fresh air came through the arch-shaped opening—fragrant and spicy, with a subtle redolence of mold: the near-May air of Miami.

"Smells like Bangkok," Ricky said. . . .

Our maid had left for the day so the house was silent; and the yard boy was not working that afternoon: the only sound in the garden was made by birds. Sunlight brass-plated our pal-

## PHILIP WYLIE

Ricky started coffee.

It was all behind us now. Nice, where Ricky had relapsed; Paris, where we'd regained health—Fontainebleau, Versailles, Chartres; the frozen seas of Newfoundland; Manhattan—family and friends.

The world behind us!

In a desultory way, I opened mail that cascaded from heaps on the furniture in Ricky's office. I also opened a cryptic carton. It contained two rattan dragons, featherlight and absurd.

Nowadays we often deck their serpentine backs with hibiscus blossoms. . . .

When we were leaving Hong Kong, a stranger rushed up, handed us a brief case, asked us to "mind" it—and disappeared. Our plane was announced presently. We loitered—but finally I had to turn over the portfolio to an air-line official.

After the plane took off, the stranger reappeared and told us gratefully that he and his brief case had been reunited by the official and put aboard while the plane was held. His name was Edgar Moser and he made frequent trips to the Far East in search of objects that would attract attention to store fronts. He had a window-display business.

He asked what we'd bought in Hong Kong and we made the common small talk of tourists in the area; it concerns the excellent tailoring, fine materials, and the startling cheapness of clothing in the Free Port. By and by, I added idly that I wished I'd also bought a "wicker" dragon I'd seen in a Kowloon shop window.

"Very amusing!" Mr. Moser agreed. "I saw it, too! Know the fellow who owns the store, a Chinese friend. I have hundreds of close friends in the Orient, India, the Near East . . . fine men."

We traded addresses and I had forgotten that Moser promised me a dragon until I opened that carton that day and saw the rattan fantasies, smelled again the sweet water, the joss, the spices.

A gift of dragons!



## THE INNOCENT AMBASSADORS

We encountered many "Edgar Mosers" in many places—ordinary men perhaps. Some hadn't finished high school and were ignorant, maybe—naïve, too—in the crafts of state. But they had Mr. Moser's "hundreds of close friends" in unlikely ports and thought them all "fine men." They visited the homes of customers, played all day with the kids, ate the food of their hosts and often spoke the languages: buyers and sellers—big-hearted, loving and loved.

They go in annual thousands on their long, lonely rounds and come home a little alien. They can't explain to Wake Forest or Queens neighbors what they feel about a garage owner in Java, a storekeeper in Ceylon or the kids of a Chinese wholesale liquor dealer in Saigon. Most of Wake Forest wouldn't listen or care right now; and Queens might even take umbrage.

Yet our State Department has few peers among the professional emissaries. For these Eds and Harrys and Bills *are* America. Whoever in a far land comes to know them will know more of America than all our journals, movies and information centers tell. Each such person—man, wife, growing youngster—will learn what "being an American" means from living acts of one who might be unable to say in English (let alone Siamese or Urdu) what he is. He does *better* than all saying. Incorporate in the man is his experience of American being: he feels what he never tries to say . . . and needs not.

These, also, are innocent ambassadors. Use-of-force and pride-in-power are foreign to them. They understand the appeal of freedom to others, concede the right of self-determination and recognize that it includes the right to be wrong.

But our American today is governed by yesterday's old-book faiths. Beside the Potomac, soldiers stock their arsenal. Earnestly, they project hydrogen fire-fights, develop new concepts of "graduated weapons pressure" and pore over their "Theory of Games." The megaton muscles are necessary to hold off our enemy. But more is needed that soldiers are ill equipped to furnish:

## PHILIP WYLIE

assume? Where is the American counterassumption? What value rests in kiloton checkers, megaton trumps—if our adversary also plays and ceaselessly wins at *chess*? Plays and wins with pieces insidiously whittled from psychology and politics, anthropology, sciences unknown to our soldiers, and philosophy, also? Shall we forever muscle up for yesterday and keep our “godly” minds so mummified we cannot even engage in the battle of ideas now snatching tomorrow from us? What counter could we use?

Free men! Free men, alone, are the counters! And any American, every American, can exhibit usefulness by stepping forward! The very step, the act, is his salvo since, *slavery excepted, there is no substitute for individual responsibility.*

These things, according to St. John, were clear to a man we call Jesus, long ago. And they have not changed. Nor we.

When enough Americans approach mankind in liberty and brotherhood, we will dispel the gospel of men-as-animals. We will restore men to humanity. And we will save liberty. Then our America will survive—an incident of mere American *being*, of our reassumption of our Liberty.

And hear this:

Everyone who goes forth in that fashion nowadays, or ever, will be welcome. For I have looked into a million brown, beseeching eyes, and in all I saw the light of liberty, here dim but there radiant. And all those eyes implored me to tell you.

# Queen of France

ANDRÉ CASTELOT



AN ABRIDGEMENT

## The Author

ANDRÉ CASTELOT was born on January 23, 1911 at Anvers, Belgium, but received his education in France. He now lives in Paris where he is associated with various publications, among them *Figaro-Littéraire*, *Carrefour*, *Miroir de l'Histoire* and *Historie*. Mr. Castelot also conducts a weekly broadcast on the French radio and has a show on Luxembourg television.

## Priceless Festivities

TOWARDS THE END of the winter of 1770 the servants installed a second bed in the Empress Maria Theresa's enormous and draughty bedroom in the Hofburg at Vienna. Every evening it was occupied by a fair-haired little girl of fourteen, who had no longer been a child since Thursday, 7 February, at precisely a quarter past five in the evening—an intimate piece of information which gave the Empress "extreme pleasure" and which a messenger of the French Embassy carried at full gallop to Versailles, to Louis XV, whose pleasure, it appears, was no less keen.

The girl sharing the imperial bedroom was Maria Theresa's youngest daughter, the Archduchess Antonia—such was Marie Antoinette's name at that time—who in two months was to marry the Dauphin of France.

The Empress had certainly settled her children very well. Marie-Christine was Princess of Saxe-Teschen, Marie-Amélie was the reigning Duchess of Parma and Marie-Caroline was Queen of Naples. Of her sons the eldest, Joseph, King of the Romans, Emperor since the death of Francis I, reigned, together with Maria Theresa, under the name of Joseph II, and Leopold was Grand Duke of Tuscany.

Within its thick walls the Hofburg was wrapped in silence. How many times during the eight weeks preceding her daughter's departure must "King Maria Theresa," as the Hungarian grandees called her, have leant over the bed of this fair-haired child to whom she had reserved the finest role and who symbolized the end of the series of war which had for centuries set Bourbons against Hapsburgs.

Little Antonia was not pretty—she was something better. In spite of a high, rounded forehead, irregular teeth, a somewhat

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

aquiline nose and a lower lip which was already full of disdain, she was adorable. Her tutor, the Abbé de Vermond, who was of a reserved nature, nevertheless said with enthusiasm: "You might find faces which are more regularly beautiful, but I doubt if you could find one more attractive."

Maria Theresa, during her youth, had seen her father, Charles VI, struggle against France; in those days they fought, for Poland, on the Rhine and in Italy. A year after her accession, in 1741, the Empress had in her turn to fight France in order to save her inheritance. She had not been able to stop Frederick II, an ally of Louis XV, from snatching Silesia from her. But Louis XV, callously abandoned by the King of Prussia, had turned towards Vienna. And, after thirty years of slaughter, all the spilt blood, all the forgotten victories, the shameful defeats and the degrading treaties led to the bed where little Antonia slept, the symbol of the alliance between France and Austria, or rather, between two people—Louis XV and Maria Theresa, backed by their Ministers, Choiseul and Kaunitz.

All four strove to maintain the union, in spite of the violent opposition of their peoples and in spite of the French King's unfortunate daughters, who had been anti-Austrian because their father's mistress, the Pompadour, was not, and would continue to be so because the du Barry was not either. For three years, since the Marquis de Durfort's arrival in Vienna at the beginning of 1767, a kind of ballet could have been observed: the Empress offering her daughter and the French Ambassador at once refusing and accepting her.

In thinking of her daughter's "establishment" Maria Theresa foresaw with apprehension the young Archduchess's bewilderment on encountering the corruption at Versailles after spending all her youth at a homely court—even bourgeois, if Goethe is to be believed. Maria Theresa constantly repeated to the child: "You must not mention what is customary, nor expect it to be followed. On the contrary, you must adapt yourself entirely to what the French court is accustomed to do."

For, in conformity with her strategy, the Empress continued

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

to act as though the marriage were official. In June 1769, on the eve of the feast of St. Antony, she gave a great entertainment in her daughter's honour and placed her next to the Marquis de Durfort. So that there should be no doubt at all in the minds of the guests, the evening ended with a set piece of fireworks showing a dolphin spouting columns of flame through its nostrils.

This audacity had its reward for in the same month Maria Theresa received a letter from her "good brother and cousin Louis XV," who wrote to her without irony that he could "no longer delay" giving expression to his satisfaction at "the forthcoming marriage of his grandson to the Archduchess." And their betrothal was at last officially announced.

The diplomats blackened reams of paper but hardly mentioned terrible problems. At the request of M. de Choiseul, the Marquis de Durfort went to see Kaunitz to ask him a number of questions about "the marriage contract, the public entry, the solemn demand, the escorting of the bride, the place and formalities for the Remise (or transfer), and the ceremonial to be observed."

The diplomats blackened reams of paper but hardly mentioned the future married pair. Two months before the marriage the Empress realised that her daughter had received no other picture of her fiancé than that of a brilliant, sparkling dolphin belching fire into the sky at Laxenburg. The unfortunate girl risked being somewhat disappointed on her arrival at Versailles. The Empress therefore asked Durfort if she might be sent a portrait of her future son-in-law. And Maria Theresa warned her little daughter that princesses have no right to expect love. "Domestic happiness consists in mutual trust and kindness," she insisted. "Passionate love soon disappears!"

Until then the Queens of France had always tried to forget their original nationality. Maria Theresa was of another opinion and gave advice which was later to prove serious: "Remain a good German!"

Antonia's temperament gave her the most anxiety. "I realised that her character comprised much frivolity, lack of application

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

and obstinacy in following her own will, together with adroitness in evading intended reproaches." She strove tirelessly to put some ballast into that light head and to tame the stubborn will she could already perceive behind that little round forehead.

On the morning of 15 April 1770, Easter Sunday, M. de Durfort, *Ordinary Ambassador* of His Most Christian Majesty, left Vienna—to return an hour later as *Ambassador Extraordinary*, as though he were coming from France. Little Antonia watched the spectacle from Countess Trauttmansdorff's house.

And what a spectacle it was! It cost more than 100 million francs of present-day money and M. de Durfort had received only half this from Versailles to pay for all the celebrations. The Ambassador Extraordinary might have ruined himself, but he could at least boast that he had not disappointed the Viennese, who were dazzled by the passage of 48 carriages, each drawn by six horses. Incidentally, the whole stable was sold the next day by M. de Durfort to help replenish his exchequer.

On the following day M. de Durfort was publicly received in audience by the Queen-Empress and the Emperor Joseph II. This was for the official proposal. On ending his speech the Ambassador turned towards the door and made a sign to a rider who seemed at that moment to have arrived from France. He brought Marie Antoinette a letter from her fiancé and a portrait. This was the sixth in six weeks—they were making up for lost time!

On the next day—17 April—in the presence of her mother, her brother, the Marquis de Durfort and all the Ministers, Antonia performed her first political act: her renunciation of the hereditary Austrian succession. In the evening Antonia was received by her brother at a great supper in the Belvedere for 1,500 guests followed by a ball. A vast ballroom, lit by 3,500 candles, was erected for the purpose. The façade, walls and balconies were covered with "appropriate" decorations: it was all torches of love, dolphins, glowing vases borne by seraphim.

On the evening of the next day, Wednesday, it was M. de Durfort's turn to extend princely hospitality. Here too flaming



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

dolphins sparkled in the night, but the Ambassador had not considered this symbol to be enough, and pictures lit by 8,000 lamps were disposed on pyramids. One saw Hymen ordering Louis-Auguste to wed the goddess of beauty, then the Danube and the Seine lovingly mingling their waters, and finally "H.R. H. the Dauphine" walking to France "on a carpet of flowers sown by Love."

On Thursday, 19 April, at six o'clock in the evening, the whole court went in great pomp to the church of the Augustines, where the marriage by proxy was celebrated. Little Antonia, all smiles, advanced with her mother and brother. She looked enchanting in her dress of cloth of silver.

Archduke Ferdinand, 17 months older than the bride, took the Dauphin's place and knelt at his sister's side before the altar. The Papal Nuncio, Mgr. Visconti, officiated, assisted by the court curé, who bore the warlike name of Briselance. After the *Te Deum* a salvo was fired in the Spitalplatz and it only remained for them to go to supper.

The eve of the departure for France was devoted to a final public repast, to leave-taking and to correspondence. Maria Theresa wrote no fewer than three letters to Louis XV, asking the King "to be indulgent towards any thoughtless act" that might be committed by "her very dear child." No document in the archives gives us any details of that last night in the Empress's bedroom, but we can imagine the tears of the little girl who doubtless knew that she would never again embrace her mother, the mother she feared yet adored, and those of the woman who not without anguish saw the departure of the child "who was her delight," but of whose frivolity and thoughtlessness she was also aware. "I am bathed in tears," she wrote the next day when the cavalcade of 366 horses had borne her child away into the distance.

The long procession of 57 carriages preceded by three postillions blowing their horns finally arrived on 7 May at the

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

the orders of Prince Starhemberg, Commissioner Plenipotentiary "in charge of the remise," there were 132 persons: ladies-in-waiting, serving women, hairdressers, secretaries, dress-makers, surgeons, pages, furriers, chaplains, apothecaries, lackeys, cooks and menservants of all kinds. During this last night on German soil Marie Antoinette, who from now on would bear these names only, was sad. Tears flowed from her eyes and her thoughts turned towards her mother. Her ladies heard her sigh: "I shall never see her again!"

In spite of what Mme Campan [Marie Antoinette's future *femme du chambre*] said—and after her all the other historians—the little Dauphine was not stripped naked on the Rhine island on the morning of the 7th, so that she might not retain so much as a piece of ribbon from her former homeland. That old custom had been abandoned. As the archives relate Marie Antoinette simply put on a ceremonial dress brought from Vienna.

Followed by her Austrian escort, the little Dauphine, giving her hand to Starhemberg, entered the *salle de remise* by the "Austrian" door and stood before the large table symbolising the frontier. There were the French Ambassador Extraordinary, the Comte de Noailles, and his two assistants, the commissioners Bouret and Gérard. The scene was a short one: Marie Antoinette listened to M. de Noailles making a speech of exceptional banality and submitted to a recital of the official act by Bouret.

That was all: the Archduchess was now French. The Austrian ladies kissed her hand, and took their departure; the "French" door opened to admit the Contesse de Noailles and the Comte de Saulx-Tavannes.

Surrounded as she was by strangers—only Starhemberg remained present—the poor girl must have felt at a loss, and she threw herself into the arms of her lady-in-waiting, as though for safety. But the severe Contesse de Noailles considered that this effusion did not come within the protocol and she hastened to present the girl's household to her. In order to avoid inter-

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

and rivalry, Louis XV had preferred to maintain the former household of his deceased Queen, Maria Leczinska. For years these ladies had shared the slow-moving existence of their deserted mistress, and neither in their faces nor in their behavior was there any breath of youth or gaiety. Marie Antoinette must certainly have shuddered a little when she thought she must henceforth spend the greater part of her time with these mature ladies.

However, she smiled politely as she walked gracefully towards the antechamber—and towards France.

In the unanimous opinion of witnesses, and from the first moment of her entry into France, Marie Antoinette's smile charmed and attracted, her "light step," her "archduchess's bearing" and "the somewhat proud carriage of her head and shoulders" made their effect. "As one watches the princess it is difficult to refrain from feeling a respect mingled with tenderness." And in all the accounts one finds the same astonishment of her contemporaries at Marie Antoinette's complexion, a complexion "literally a blend of lilies and roses."

Marie Antoinette's arrival among this decaying monarchy, this cankered unhealthy society had the effect of a fresh bouquet of wild flowers. The little Dauphine continued to smile. She smiled at the presentation in Strasbourg, of the gouty Cardinal de Rohan, the dyspeptic counts forming the cathedral council, and the deputations from the guilds.

For a whole week, she stoically bore successive comparisons with Venus, Hebe, Psyche, Antiope, Flora and Minerva. She bravely submitted to triumphal arches, military honours, gala balls, peals of artillery, deputations, dinners, speeches, shows, entertainments, interminable presentations, bell-ringing, *Te Deum*, illuminations, endless whirling suns, "sheets of Chinese fire," Pyrrhic columns, cavalcades of horses "all alight," temples of conjugal love and betrothal, temporary buildings topped by spirits with trumpets announcing to France the arrival of her future sovereign. Everywhere she went she seemed happy and

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

yet, apart from the Austrian Ambassador to Paris, the Comte de Mercy-Argenjeau, Starhemberg and the Abbé de Vermond, she was surrounded by strangers.

The vast procession, preceded by fifty guards, wound its way slowly along the dusty road, which had been remade especially for this journey. "Are you very anxious to see the Dauphin?" one of her ladies asked her.

With her charming smile, she replied mischievously: "Madame, in five days I shall be at Versailles, and on the sixth I shall more easily be able to answer you."

On the evening of 14 May, on the outskirts of the Forest of Compiègne, lifeguards, light horse musketeers, and gendarmes were drawn up in battle formation keeping back the crowd.

The King was waiting for "my granddaughter," as he called her. Mesdames, the daughters of Louis XV—a group of crabbed old maids—stood near the King.

The King was waiting . . . He had forgotten to be bored and to think of death. However, he was somewhat pre-occupied. How would the Dauphine greet Mme du Barry? A fortnight earlier Jeanne Bécu, the illegitimate daughter of a little seamstress, Jeanne Bécu, "the prostitute," as Choiseul said, Jeanne Bécu, called *la Bourbonnaise* by the pamphleteers, had been presented at court, presented to Mesdames, the King's daughters, presented to the Dauphin!

Suddenly a great murmur arose. The Dauphine's procession was approaching. The people applauded. The musketeers' drums, trumpets and hautboys sounded. The gold flowered carriage had hardly stopped when the little Dauphine jumped out. She made a few rapid, almost running, steps ahead of the radiant Choiseul, who had gone to meet her a few leagues off. The girl threw herself at the King's feet; he raised her up and embraced her. He was smiling, for the young Dauphine was charming and beautifully formed. Of her own accord she kissed a great booby of fifteen who was stuck there beside the King, shifting from one foot to the other. This was the Dauphin

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

Once seated in the King's carriage Marie Antoinette had plenty of opportunity for looking at her husband, who sat opposite her and did not even turn his vague, short-sighted eyes on his "wife." And yet she was very fresh and charming. It was obvious that this shy, awkward boy wished himself elsewhere. Naturally the fourteen-year-old girl could not guess that the sullen temperament and heavy, uncouth body concealed qualities which made him, if not a brilliant prince, at least later a "worthy man." Besides, there was some excuse for his "lubberliness." His father had died when he was eleven and his mother just as he reached his thirteenth year, and he had been very badly brought up by the Duc de la Vauguyon.

And what did the bridegroom think of this blonde girl with the pink complexion who in two days would be brought to his bed? Did he already fear the irony in those somewhat prominent eyes? Did he know that she was given to mockery? Did he guess that the full, pretty lip would become disdainful?

Louis XV was progressively more "enchanted." Already, in the clearing on the outskirts of the forest, by winningly presenting her cheek she had almost softened the withered hearts of Mesdames and on her arrival at Compiègne she was to make the conquest of her cousins Orléans, Condé and Conti.

For the last month M. de Mercy's life had been a burden to him. It was said that Mme du Barry was to be one of the 39 "ladies of quality" to be invited to supper with the royal family on the next day at the Château de la Muette, the last stage before Versailles. "It seems inconceivable," he wrote to Maria Theresa, "that the King should choose this moment to grant his favourite an honour which has hitherto been refused her."

And all day, as the carriages rolled towards Paris, the Ambassador quaked with apprehension.

He was barely able to appreciate the applause of the Parisians who cheered the Dauphine as her procession wound its way around Paris. The King, who had not been cheered for a

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

daughter at La Muette. On descending from her carriage she met the Dauphin's two brothers, Provence and Artois, the future Louis XVIII and Charles X. The Comte de Mercy began to breathe again. Surely the King would not make these two children of 13 and 14 dine with "the creature"! But suddenly the Ambassador turned pale. Among the ladies of quality Mme du Barry, sparkling with jewels, was bowing to the Dauphine.

Twenty-three years before, another German princess—Maria-Josepha of Saxony—had also come to France to marry a Dauphin. She had been handed over on the same island in the Rhine, had been acclaimed at Strasbourg, awaited by the King and her "husband" in the Forest of Compiègne, and had then arrived at a castle where she had met the royal favourite—it was then Mme de Pompadour. Finally, on the following day, her carriage, greeted by the trumpets of the bodyguards, had drawn up before the marble staircase at Versailles.

On Wednesday 16 May 1770 Marie Antoinette in her turn, having made the acquaintance of two little girls—Mesdames Clotilde and Elisabeth, her husband's sisters—was led to the bedroom which had belonged to the Princess of Saxony and where the future Louis XVI, Louis XVIII and Charles X had been born.

The memory of "poor Pepa," as Louis XV had called his daughter-in-law, still clung to this room. At the beginning of his marriage Louis XVI's father, the widower of a Spanish princess whom he adored, could not enter his new wife's bedroom without bursting into tears. The very furniture reminded him of the one he had lost. The little Saxon had behaved admirably. "Give free course to your tears, Monsieur, and do not be afraid that they will offend me. On the contrary, they show what I have a right to hope for for myself, if I am happy enough to win your esteem."

She did win it, beyond anything she could have hoped for, and an astonished Versailles witnessed a touching idyll of royal marriage. Would this exceptional phenomenon be renewed?

The bride was now ready to make a

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

royalty. The selected public—for gala first nights—crowded together in the Hall of Mirrors and the Chapel. The curtain rose at one o'clock.

The Grand Master of Ceremonies preceded the bride and groom, who were hand in hand. Marie Antoinette—a symphony in rose, gold and silver sparkling with diamonds—was like a ray of sunshine. As she passed through the Hall of Mirrors and the Grand Apartments she still kept her enchanting smile. At her side, with the rolling gait which was typical of so many of the Bourbons, walked Louis-Auguste, scowling in his gold clothes, which had cost 12,322 livres.

The Swiss Guards lined up in the Chapel beat their enormous drums and blew their fifes to proclaim the King's arrival. The nave and the galleries with their tiered seats were packed. The bride and groom knelt on squares of red velvet fringed with gold. The King and the Princes stepped forward. The Grand Almoner, Mgr de la Roche-Aymon, Archbishop of Rheims, blessed the thirteen pieces of gold—a reminder of the purchase of the wife—and the wedding rings. Before placing the ring on Marie Antoinette's fourth finger Louis-Auguste glanced at his grandfather, who nodded his head. The Archbishop gave his blessing to the two children kneeling before him and Louis XV returned to his chair. The Mass began.

After the *Pater Noster* the Bishop of Senlis, the King's First Almoner, and the Bishop of Chartres, the Dauphine's First Almoner, placed a canopy of silver brocade above the pair.

The parish priest of Versailles brought the marriage register. The King signed, followed by Marie Antoinette, whose hand trembled a little, making a blot.

On returning to her apartments Madame la Dauphine received the officers of her household. They took the oath of fidelity to her in the presence of the Comte de Saint-Florentin. After the Lady of Honour and the twelve ladies who accompanied her—the new ones were fortunately younger than

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

ing gentlemen, the First Equerry, the Controllers-General, who had themselves received the oath from an army of employees: fourteen waiting women, two preachers, four almoners, five chaplains, a *Chevalier d'Honneur*, one maître d'hôtel in ordinary, four maître d'hôtel, two equeries in ordinary, four equeries, nineteen valets de chambre, five ushers of the bed-chamber, two of the antechamber and two of the *cabinet*. Had Marie Antoinette any idea, as she saw these officers bow before her, that any encroachment on their prerogatives would provoke a drama? To use their own expression, it would destroy "all the splendour of their office."

That evening, in the Hall of Mirrors, it was as bright as day. Sitting at a table covered by a new cloth of green velvet with gold fringes, the King and the newly married couple played the boring game of *cavagnole*. The ushers, the Swiss Guards and the King's *valets de chambre* received 6,000 guests at the doors. If one wanted to see the King play one had to walk along behind the railings in the Hall of Mirrors and go out by the Salon de Paix and the Queen's apartments. Many interested people joined this procession without being invited: they were the "common people." They had been chased from the park by the storm which broke during the afternoon. The barriers were forced and the dripping sightseers mingled with the guests and watched the spectacle.

A second storm broke and died down. The royal family moved to the new Opera House, where the feast was to take place.

Escorted by the bodyguards and by a crowd of waiting gentlemen accompanied by maîtres d'hôtel with their silver-gilt batons, hailed by the rolling of drums, the "King's Meat"—that is, the hundreds of dishes making up the feast—arrived from the Great Offices 600 metres away.

The programme included a gigantic show of fireworks, but the storm had drenched the preparations made by Ruggieri, the pyrotechnist, and the spectacle was postponed until the Saturday evening, to the great disappointment of the royal



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

All that remained was to put the couple to bed. Everyone in the court was crushed together on the ground floor to see the Archbishop of Rheims bless the bed, the King hand the shirt to the Dauphin, who seemed progressively more bored and sleepy, and the Duchesse de Chartres help the blushing Marie Antoinette put on her nightgown.

The bride and groom lay down behind the hangings and then suddenly—as was the etiquette—the bed-curtains were drawn aside. All present bowed deeply and followed the King out.

Twenty-four years ago, in the same bed and after an evening of similar festivities, Maria Josepha of Saxony had spent her wedding night consoling her husband who was weeping bitterly as he thought of his first wife. On this evening Marie Antoinette had no one to console. In the bed where he was born the Dauphin fell into a noisy sleep.

On the next day Louis-Auguste wrote his famous "Nothing," in his private notebook—a "nothing" which was to become distressingly symbolic.

On the evening of Saturday the 19th everyone moved to the great gallery and the terrace to see the famous fireworks. The bride and groom, the King and Mercy stood at the central window of the Hall of Mirrors. Thousands of rockets painted on the sky the arms of the Dauphin and the Dauphine and the inevitable temple of Hymen. While the catherine wheels, the windmills, the spheres and the suns turned, while the pyramids of fire sparkled and the shining cascades flowed, while mortars and "rolling fires" exploded, imitating "the sounds of war," hundreds of musicians could be heard on the Grand Canal.

Only the bouquet "in gold and brilliants" misfired. Thousands of people from Paris and Versailles danced until six o'clock in the morning in the illuminated park. The soldiers on duty—700 Swiss Guards and French Guards with a white plume in their hats—did not have to intervene. Everything went quite well.

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

since begun her fourth night as a married woman. Louis-Auguste snored at her side. Had she resigned herself to this strange situation? Since according to Mercy's diagnosis her husband's rapid growth had stopped everything, there was, perhaps nothing to do but wait. This was what her mother was to advise. "You are both so young! As far as your health is concerned it is all for the best. You will both gain strength."

The festivities were over, but who was to pay the bill: the 30,385 rockets for the fireworks, the 90,000 lamps and the 603,611 vases for illuminating the park, the 4,492 roman candles, the 14,444 cartridges fired, the 6,820 pots of fire; the 1,841 costumes made for the theatrical performances—in short the nine millions (nearly 2,000 million francs of our money) spent on the marriage festivities?

"What do you think of my festivities at Versailles?" the King had asked his Controller of Finances.

"Sire, I think they are . . . *priceless!*"

So, as regards many of the expenses, the example was followed of M. de Marigny, who had decided not to settle the bills of the carpet manufacturers who had built the new theatre. A whole file of the National Archives is filled with the pathetic pleas of tradesmen in want who at the beginning of the Revolution were still asking to be paid at least something on account of what they had spent twenty years before for Marie Antoinette's wedding.

The Dauphine had come triumphantly through the test. She had conquered Versailles. "Her politeness embellished her countenance," we are told by a witness. "She had such a graceful word for everyone and curtsied so prettily that in a few days she delighted everyone . . . There is a charm in her manner which will turn all our heads." While waiting to wear the crown of France she wore that of charm and grace. Everyone crowded round her and flattered her. When she did not think of Louis-Auguste's sulkiness she was completely happy.

## Madame la Dauphine

THE FESTIVITIES WERE over. Versailles had relapsed into calm, pending the annual exodus of the court to Marly, Choisy, Fontainebleau and Compiègne. Etiquette held sway, but in between the performances—the *leves*, the *couchers*, midday mass, meals and games—ordinary life was able to go on.

The Dauphine had much leisure. Louis-Auguste exhausted himself hunting and in the evenings thought only of repose. His "insensibility," as Mercy called it, worried Maria Theresa, who was anxious to have a grandson. "If a girl as pretty as the Dauphine cannot stir the Dauphin," she wrote in despair, "every remedy will be useless."

Louis-Auguste's "strange behaviour" was to have such repercussions that it is worth dwelling on and listening to the opinion of a doctor. Dr. Paul Ganière, the excellent biographer of Corvisart, wrote to me on the subject: "What was the matter? Did the Dauphin feel physically repelled by the young Archduchess? Not at all. She was charming and expressed her satisfaction in being his wife. Although not very expansive he did not mind revealing his happiness on many occasions. Then was the heir to the throne abnormal? Everyone was soon convinced of it, particularly since rumours and indiscretions whose origin it is very difficult to trace have left the impression that nature had unfortunately endowed him with an anatomical abnormality which, although slight, required surgical treatment at an early age so as not to interfere with his future development. This malformation, which was either ignored or deliberately neglected when action should have been taken, through fear of responsibility, played a serious part in the difficulties surrounding the consummation of the marriage. But this was not

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

us present him as a boy heavy of mind and body, showing definite backwardness in various features, particularly in the glands to which doctors nowadays attach so much importance. Nature had made him what he was and if the scalpel had been used earlier he might have been different. Tormented by an inferiority complex and vaguely aware of being ridiculous, he yielded to the advice of the doctors who assured him that with the help of a healthy diet and violent physical exercise all would be well.

In order to follow his diet the Dauphin ate enormously. Nothing spoiled his appetite, neither the presences of 20 Officers of the Mouth busying themselves round his table, nor the armed guards protecting his "Meat," nor the hundred or so people who, in profound silence, watched him eat.

Marie Antoinette merely nibbled. The Dauphine already had a sense of the ridiculous. Mercy was soon warning Maria Theresa. "Madame la Dauphine is careless of outward appearances. . . . She makes fun of people who appear to her ridiculous." The Empress scolded her: "It is said that you have begun to make fun of everyone and to burst out laughing in people's faces. . . . By amusing five or six young ladies or gentlemen you will lose the rest. Do not give way to an inclination to make fun." But the Dauphine shrugged her shoulders. She considered that she was no longer a child and that her education was complete.

One evil came from her intimacy with her aunts. At the beginning, when she was neglected by her husband, the little girl had no other resources than to go four or five times a day to see Mesdames.

The influence of Mesdames soon became disastrous. Marie Antoinette was sickened by the thought that her grandfather had a mistress—and such a mistress! She at once wrote to her mother: "It is pitiful to see the King's partiality for Mme du Barry, who is the most stupid and impertinent creature you can imagine." In fact, at first, she treated her grandfather's mistress "correctly," but Mesdames were gradually to force her from the

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

line of conduct she had wisely set herself. The Choiseul affair came to help them.

In December Mme du Barry persuaded her royal lover to dismiss her greatest enemy, the Minister Choiseul. What was Marie Antoinette to do when the man to whom she owed everything was exiled to the provinces? On 6 January Maria Theresa sent her an urgent letter enjoining her "never to forget the gratitude she owed to Choiseul." Marie Antoinette thought to obey her mother's wishes by ignoring the favourite's presence and according her not a word or a look. Mme du Barry might have been invisible. Her aunts and the Dauphin encouraged her in this course of action. The whole of Versailles watched the struggle with delight.

It was not Maria Leczinska's room on the first floor, where Marie Antoinette now lived, which was "the Queen's apartment," but the little low-ceilinged but exquisite rooms in which the Comtesse was installed. The seat of the Government was there, and d'Aiguillon, who through the favour of Mme du Barry had succeeded Choiseul, worked with the King in the favourite's new home. It became difficult, not to say impossible, to avoid the uncrowned queen.

Poor Mercy knew something about this. He explained to the girl that her attitude was so displeasing to Louis XV that the Franco-Austrian alliance was endangered by it.

Surprisingly enough, Maria Theresa, who in her own dominions had prostitutes whipped, took the "stupid creature's" part. Austria's interests demanded it. The Empire had now more than ever need of French friendship. If the Alliance should fall apart France would not let Austria draw nearer to Prussia with a view to dividing Poland. In fact, if the "little girl," as Kaunitz called her, refused to speak one word to Mme du Barry the Austrian Empire might say goodbye to its share of the Polish cake which Catherine II and Frederick were getting ready to devour. Marie Antoinette would have to sacrifice herself.

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

her own—"I shall always glory in belonging to it," she wrote—she gave way. She promised Mercy to speak to Mme du Barry.

The whole palace heard of it. The aunts were furious, but the King wept with joy. He greeted the Dauphine "with demonstrations of tenderness." Maria Theresa and in particular Joseph II were delighted. Poland could be divided without any obstacle.

The tragi-comic struggle between the two most important women at court—a child and a courtesan—had one advantage. It separated the Dauphine from her aunts.

In consequence Marie Antoinette became more intimate with her husband. "As for my dear husband," she wrote to her mother, "he is greatly changed, and all for the better. He shows much friendship towards me and has even begun to repose confidence in me." Mercy was soon able to inform his sovereign that "the Dauphin is entirely captivated by his wife."

The Dauphine could, of course, do nothing to remedy the "fatal object," as Mercy called it, but she was too much of a coquette not to try her power. Emboldened by this, the Dauphin consented to join his wife's circle. During these years preceding her reign it consisted principally of the young couples of Provence, Chartres and Bourbon.

It seems hardly credible that after living for more than three years in the Ile de France Marie Antoinette knew no more of Paris than the Porte de la Conférence. This was the fault of Louis XV, who did not at all care to see his grandchildren win the applause he had not received for a long time.

Finally, not without frequent requests from the city, the Entry was fixed for Tuesday, 8 June 1773. At half-past eleven in the morning the trumpets sounded, the cannon at the Invalides began to thunder, and the procession of the Dauphin and Dauphine appeared. After the service in Notre Dame, Marie Antoinette and her husband took a round-about route to the Tuileries for dinner. All along the way the pretty Dauphine and

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

Louis-Auguste himself were wildly cheered. The crowd in the Tuileries gardens were in transports.

A few days later the Dauphine wrote to her mother, "Last Tuesday I was fêted in a way I shall never forget as long as I live. We received every imaginable honour. But that, although it was very well, was not what touched me the most, but the tenderness and the eagerness of the poor people who, in spite of the taxes which oppress them, were transported with joy on seeing us. I cannot tell you, my dear mother, what joy and affection were shown us. How happy we are, in our position, to win the friendship of a people so easily."

The people of Paris wanted to make it clear that they put their hope in their future sovereigns. They did not confuse them with "the old gallant" and his Bourbonnaise.

His wife's charm and extraordinary popularity had combined to transform Louis-Auguste. "H.R.H. shows in the best possible light," wrote Mercy, "and M. le Dauphin fills this position much better than his physical and moral constitution would have led one to hope." The booby of Compiègne was no more than a memory. Marie Antoinette said so herself. "There is, however, no sign of pregnancy," Mercy sighed: "By the most incredible misfortune our hopes in that direction, instead of increasing, seem to have become more remote."

As a consolation Marie Antoinette went in for amusement. As often as she could she went to Paris. Nothing was more delightful than the masked balls during carnival time in 1774. On Sunday 30 January she arrived shortly after midnight, and recognized in the crowd a young foreigner who had been presented to her and whom she had seen at two of her Monday balls. In true carnival spirit she went up to him and spoke to him for a long time. He was tall, handsome, well made and pleasant. They laughed together until the Dauphine, who was beginning to be recognised by the crowd, was obliged to move away. He was the son of a field-marshal and a member of the Royal Council of Sweden. He was making the tour of Europe

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

for his education; would be 20 years old in a few months and was called Axel Fersen. "A masked ball, a domino, a mask, two hearts," wrote the last biographer of Marie Antoinette and the handsome Swede. This is all very pretty, but the two hearts were not yet beating in unison.

At Versailles the balls, held on Mondays and Wednesdays, went on until six o'clock in the morning. To please the Dauphine more festivities and more balls were organised and everywhere the Dauphine laughed, danced, made fun, enjoyed herself and, in the words of the Goncourts, "passed by like a song."

"At the end of Louis XV's reign," writes Pierre de Nolhac, "the most serious fault with which Marie Antoinette could be reproached was excused by her age: an excessive love of pleasure. With her health and youthful eagerness she found there a natural compensation for the strict and tedious court duties to which she had to submit."

The Parisians, indeed, were glad to see that their future Queen could laugh as well as a Bécu or a Poisson. "Paris is completely charmed by the Archduchess," wrote Mercy. "I see approaching the time when the great destiny of the Archduchess will be fulfilled. The King is growing old . . . M. le Dauphin will never have the strength or the will to reign by himself. If the Archduchess does not govern him he will be governed by others."

The Empress replied with wisdom: "I confess frankly that I do not wish my daughter to have a decided influence in affairs. I have learned only too well from my own experience how crushing a burden is the government of a vast kingdom. Moreover, I know my daughter's youth and frivolity and her dislike of concentration—and she knows nothing!—all of which makes me fear for her success in governing a kingdom as dilapidated as France is at present."

Marie Antoinette may have felt that her mother was right. On the evening of 27 April 1774, her heart beat fast as she



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

for those two children to take up the dishonoured crown? That evening the King's condition did not appear serious. He had a fever and a bad headache.

When the Dauphine saw the invalid again towards five o'clock on the following day he had become worse. He had already been bled twice. Around his bed were six doctors, five surgeons and three apothecaries. The room was almost in darkness for the patient's eyes were hurt by the slightest light. Suddenly a servant of the bedchamber accidentally raised a torch. The King's face appeared in full light: his forehead and cheeks were covered with little red spots. The doctors looked at each other. The King had smallpox.

Marie Antoinette, who had been inoculated at Vienna, hastily led away the Dauphin, who had never had the terrible illness. But she was not to enter the King's room again.

On 10 May, at a quarter past three in the afternoon, the flame of a lighted candle in one of the windows of the royal bedroom was extinguished. The appalling agony was ended.

Marie Antoinette was in her own apartments. The Dauphin was there, striding about the room. Suddenly, in the words of a witness, "a terrible noise, exactly like that of thunder, was heard": it was the crowd of courtiers running through the Hall of Mirrors to salute the new King. At this strange sound Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI started. They had understood, and the first comers to the room saw the young Queen of eighteen and the King of nineteen on their knees, weeping bitterly. "Oh God," they repeated, embracing each other. "Oh God, protect us, we are too young to reign!"

## "The Feather-head"

IN SPITE OF THE HARD TIMES the great mourning machine was set in motion. Although the décor was funereal, hearts were joyful. Everything was hoped for from the new reign. Eyes "wet with tears" were fashionable and indicated not grief but tenderness—tenderness towards the nineteen-year-old King who admittedly possessed no grace, but who seemed so simple and natural and such a "good fellow" in spite of his youth. There was tenderness, too, for the pretty eighteen-year-old Queen who so charmingly took her husband's arm when walking in the alleys at Choisy.

Marie Antoinette, having recovered from her first anxiety, was intoxicated by the three words: Queen of France. "Although God caused me to be born into the rank I occupy today," she wrote to her mother, "I cannot refrain from admiring the disposition of Providence which has chosen me, the youngest of your children, for the finest kingdom in Europe."

But Maria Theresa faced the reality and sighed. On 18 May she wrote to the new sovereigns: "You are both very young and your burden is a heavy one. I am distressed, truly distressed by it." Although 400 leagues distant from the Ile de France, she seemed already to have guessed that now that her "Antonia" was her own mistress she would ride over Versailles and its customs like an escaped colt.

In extenuation of the Queen one should remember how tyrannical were these outworn customs, some of which dated from the time of Francis I. Count Rivarol observed justly: "Always more of a woman than a Queen, she forgot that she was born to live and die on a real throne." For Marie Antoinette, in the words of another witness, "the title she most desired was that

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

To be fashionable one had to please—please oneself and please others. To be fashionable was to be constantly surrounded by a court of adorers. During this first winter of her reign Marie Antoinette was chiefly preoccupied by her balls, and the papers of Papillon de la Ferté, Keeper of the Privy Purse, reflect the Queen's frequent requests "which never cease to entail rather heavy expenses." The carnival of 1775 "gave the young people too easy an access to the Queen," Mercy complained, but Easter did not restore calm. The Queen was constantly surrounded by a whole troupe of thoughtless, gilded youth.

There was the Comte d'Adhémar, whose real name was Montfalcon. The Comte de Vaudreuil had presented him. There was Esterhazy, a Hungarian who had just arrived at court. Another foreign member of the Coterie was the Prince de Ligne. He was the most disinterested of Marie Antoinette's friends and his love for the Queen was respectful. For him "her soul was as beautiful and white as her face."

Another friend was the Duc de Coigny. The friend with the most influence was Besenval, pronounced *Baiseval*. Polish on his mother's side—she was the Comtesse Bielinska—the Baron de Besenval was Swiss on his father's side and for this reason bore the rank in France of lieutenant-colonel of the Swiss Guards. The most dangerous of them all was undoubtedly the Duc de Lauzun, towards whom the Queen was much too friendly. It was a pity that she did not listen to Mercy when he declared that this irresponsible man was "very dangerous . . ." But for two years Marie Antoinette refused to take notice of the evidence. Like Besenval, Lauzun amused her.

Sometimes a spoilsport would come to spend the evening with the Princesse de Guéménée, with whom the coterie regularly gathered: it was the King. Luckily he liked to go to bed early and retired at eleven. Then the conversation became much freer. So one evening, in order to hasten his departure, someone risked putting the clock forward, and the King dis-

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

about it. The "centenarians" and "strait-laced" ladies were very severe on this joke, but the Queen shrugged her pretty shoulders. The important thing was to be among friends and chatter.

Marie Antoinette would have liked to continue with no more worries in what Maria Theresa called "her dissipations." But Louis XVI's coronation at Rheims had been fixed for Sunday, 11 June 1775. It would interrupt the fashionable little Queen's happy existence, and she yawned as she listened to the Abbé de Vermond reminding her, on Mercy's behalf, that formerly "it was a fairly frequent custom that when kings were consecrated at Rheims their queens were consecrated at the same time."

According to the Ambassador and his messenger, Marie Antoinette would have to take part in the great ceremony being prepared. But the Abbe returned empty-handed to the Petit Luxembourg, where Mercy lived. "He found the Queen completely indifferent in this connection." Marie Theresa's two confidants were hardly surprised. They well knew that these presentation days brought no amusement to their royal pupil. She much preferred to be queen of her coterie than Queen of France. The public were already beginning to be aware of this. And yet, once again—perhaps for the last time—her charm and the impulses of her heart would provoke enthusiasm and recall the first hours of her reign.

In Rheims Cathedral, the King was stretched before the altar on a fleur-de-lis covered carpet. At his side, in the same posture, was the Archbishop of Rheims. This was the only moment of the very wearing day when the two principal actors could draw breath, particularly needed by the Archbishop, who was 78 years old and already exhausted by the first two hours of the ceremony.

The anointings began. There were nine of them, accompanied by prayers which the Archbishop chanted in a trembling voice. Before the final anointing the King was clothed with the tunic, dalmatic and mantle.

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

the Seals, M. de Miromesnil, raised his voice: "Monsieur, you who represent the Duc de Bourgogne, present yourself at this act!"

The Comte de Provence stepped forward. Miromesnil turned towards the future Charles X, who in 50 years' time was to come there on his own account.

"Monseigneur, you who represent the Duc de Normandie, present yourself at this act!"

Then one by one, wearing the great ducal mantles of violet cloth and ermine, their coronets on their heads, the Ducs d'Orléans, Chartres, Condé, and Bourbon represented the other lay peers, and surrounded the King together with the six ecclesiastical peers. The Archbishop intoned further prayers, one of which has a curiously Oriental flavour: "May the King possess the strength of the rhinoceros, and may he drive the enemy nations before him, like a raging wind, to the uttermost ends of the earth."

The King had need of such strength to support the heavy crown of Charlemagne, studded with rubies and emeralds. A hinge in the crown was unobtrusively opened and was fastened on the forehead of the King, who bent under its weight. Those around him heard him sigh: "It hurts me!"

But Marie Antoinette did not hear. When from her seat she saw her husband holding the sceptre bearing the lily of enamelled gold and the hand of justice made from the horn of a unicorn, when she saw him looking just like the crowned kings adorning the manual from which the Abbé de Vermond used to teach her French history tears of emotion rolled down her fair cheeks.

The Archbishop and the peers kissed the King and cried three times: "*Vivat rex in aeternum!*" The doors of the cathedral were opened. The crowd filled the nave, crying: "Long live the King! Noel! Noel!" Outside, salvos of musketry were fired and all the bells in the town answered the great bell of the cathedral: "Noel! Noel!"

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

whole church, Mercy reported, in spite of the sacred character of the building "rang with shouts, claps and demonstrations difficult to convey." During the long ceremony which was only just beginning, the King, who was deeply moved, frequently turned his eyes towards the Queen "with a look of adoration impossible to describe."

Later, still as a spectator, the Queen was present at the interminable royal banquet. In the evening, the King, who had put off his stifling robes and heavy accessories, took the Queen's arm and without guards, like honest bourgeois, they went to walk among the crowd in the garden of the Archbishop's palace. Their reception was almost hysterical.

On 16 June the Queen drove towards Compiègne, with the cries of admiration and affection still ringing in her ears. She repeated that if she lived until a hundred she would never forget the day of the coronation. Why were Mercy and the Abbé constantly scolding her? Was she not loved, adulated? Was she not acclaimed? As the Ambassador wrote to her mother on 23 June, she did not realise that all this was merely "a momentary success which should not dazzle" since "there is not sufficient foundation for it."

The diplomat may have been farsighted, but the Queen was not. "I did my best to respond to the eagerness of the people," she wrote to her mother. "It is at once amazing and gratifying to be so well received, in spite of the dearness of bread. . . . It is a remarkable trait in the French character to be carried away by evil suggestions and then to return at once to the right road. What is certain is, that seeing the people who in the midst of their unhappiness treat us so well, we have an even stronger obligation to work for their happiness. The King seemed to me to be struck by this truth."

The King was struck by it and would do what he could, but would she? Bread was not merely dear; there was a shortage. Did she know that as the carriages went along the road to Rheims the labourers making up the road "knelt down, raising

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

ask for bread"? In the same year, 1775, at the time of the "flour wars," the rioters talked of going to "shake up" the Queen—and this was only one year after her accession, and fourteen years before the Revolution. That was indeed a warning. But once the Queen was back in Versailles she resumed her life of pleasure. For her "the happiness of the people" had nothing to do with her amusements.

Louis XVI was now undoubtedly in love with his wife "in every sense of the word," but the "fatal object" was still in the same condition. In the spring of 1775 a small, secret corridor was built between the bedrooms of the King and the Queen, passing under the Hall of Mirrors and emerging behind Marie Antoinette's bedroom. "The King's passage," of which only fragments remain today, enabled Louis to avoid the *Œil-de-Bœuf* [the ante-chamber to the state bedroom], which was like a public square, and thus continue his too conscientious and vain attempts.

"The old Roman proverb, *Tota mulier in utero*, throws a striking light on this conjugal drama," writes Dr. Ganière. "If it is true, and daily instances prove it to doctors, that the uncertain female equilibrium is often based on the satisfaction of the senses, how can one be surprised if the young Queen, undoubtedly endowed with the impetuous temperament which has characterised so many members of the Hapsburg family, appeared to the eyes of her intimates and through them to her whole people as frivolous and capricious? Nearly every night she had to submit to her husband's demands, which, although they might not yet have any real result, aroused without appeasing her senses. 'There is certainly no indifference on my side,' she wrote to the Empress, 'but my dear mother must understand that mine is a difficult situation.' She did not fully understand the unfortunate effects of these unavailing onslaughts, but had ended by instinctively shunning them. She stayed up as long as possible in the hope of finding her husband

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

questionable pleasures. She sought, certainly in no unhealthy spirit, friendships which would appease her ardent need of affection."

The reign of the favourites was about to begin.

It was the fashion of the times. In 1775 it was the accepted custom to have a woman friend—a completely respectable relationship, one must emphasise. Indeed, it was so much in vogue that the Sèvres factory had to make groups representing "The tender friends" or "Confidences between two young persons." The first "young person" to whom the Queen "confided" was the Princess de Lamballe.

During 1775, in which Madame de Lamballe rose to the height of her favour, Marie Antoinette had the Princess from Savoy appointed Principal Lady in Waiting in her Household. The nomination was not brought about without trouble. It had been necessary to plead with Louis XVI. On Marie Antoinette's assuring him that it "would be the greatest pleasure of her life," he yielded—as he always did. Faced with the extra expense entailed by the creation of this post, the Controller General protested loudly. But in spite of her father-in-law's huge fortune the Princess protested even more loudly, and she was able to enter on her duties "with means to maintain herself in this important post"—so important, indeed, that the two first Ladies of Honour resigned, considering their prerogatives attacked.

As usual the court went to Fontainebleau in the autumn. It was an incredible removal. Actors, singers, dancers and wig-makers all took the road to Fontainebleau. In 1775 it rained at Fontainebleau nearly every day and Marie Antoinette, who had caught cold, hardly ever went out. She was present at several spectacles, which were not very good, but which, for all that, cost no less than 100 million francs.

The Princesse de Lamballe had only just been nominated to her new post when...



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

into favour. Mercy told his sovereign that "the Queen has an even stronger affection for her than for any who have gone before."

Mme de Polignac's reign was to last, with a few breaks, for fourteen years. In 1775 she was 26 years old. She was married to a colonel, the Comte Jules, who had very little money. According to the best traditions the Comtesse's lover was her husband's best friend, the Comte de Vaudreuil. The family was completed by her sister-in-law Diane, née Polastron, who was ugly and hunchbacked, but far and away the most intelligent, and the most full of intrigue, of the four.

According to Diane de Polignac the Comtesse first responded to the Queen's advances without enthusiasm, but cleverly: she had no fortune and informed her sovereign that it would be best if she retired from court. Marie Antoinette, much affected, strongly opposed this. Was she not there to help her friend?

But a Queen of France had no more right to laugh at the follies of a Lauzun than to put her arm round the waist of a Lamballe or a Polignac. The people were easily "carried away by evil insinuations," particularly as these came from Versailles. As a pamphleteer said at the time: "A despicable courtier hatches them in the dark; another courtier puts them into verse or couplets and with the help of the flunkies distributes them to the Halles and the herb markets."

Marie Antoinette's exaggerated and demonstrative affection for Mme de Polignac set all Paris talking and at court unleashed a positive drama. The astonished Mercy related that "the two favourites, mutually very jealous, are constantly complaining about each other and quarrelling." Fontainebleau was a battlefield for these ladies, who had each her partisans, enemies, jealousies and intrigues. The Queen suffered from these perpetual disputes.

Another drama, that of expenses, was unfolding. The end of 1775 saw the purchase of a pair of diamond earrings for 100

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

toinette got into debt. A little later she bought for 250,000 livres bracelets which "loaded her with debts." When Maria Theresa wrote that this "filled her with anguish for the future," she replied lightheartedly: "I would not have believed that anyone would have tried to occupy my dear mother's kind attention with such trifles." The trifles were bracelets worth 50,000,000 francs.

Conforming to the prevailing fashion of anglomania, the Queen had developed a passion for horse-racing. The Comte d'Artois and the Duc de Chartres organised a race every Tuesday in the Bois de Boulogne. On that day the Queen should have received the Ambassadors. The diplomats waited in vain, and one may imagine their acid remarks on leaving Versailles after their fruitless journey.

It was terribly cold in January 1776. Wrapped up in furs, the Queen went by sledge along the boulevards. Louis XVI put on an old overcoat and walked in the country, where he paid poor people to break the ice or pardoned wood-stealers arrested by the guards in the forest of Ville-d'Avray. One morning, on his return, he met the Queen, who was coming back from a ball at the Opera.

"Did the public applaud you? How did you find them?"

"Cold. I should like to see you there, with your Turgot. I think you would be well and truly hissed."

Like "the lords and the grocers" Marie Antoinette did not care for Turgot. It was not because the Contrôleur-General could not "come to terms with human weaknesses," nor because he treated Parliament, industry, finance and the nobility roughly, nor because, like Sully, he was kind only to the farmers. It was because M. Turgot had dared to recall M. le Comte de Guines from his Embassy in London.

Guines, a "fashionable man" of whom Marie Antoinette was really fond, stayed at Versailles as often as he could. The little time he spent in London did not prevent his enjoying the pleasures of smuggling by means of the diplomatic bag. Un-

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

Turgot his portfolio. The Controller's sudden departure, willed and planned by Marie Antoinette, put an end to the famous economics reforms, which might perhaps have saved the monarchy and avoided the clash in 1789.

The pretty "feather-head," as Joseph II called her, might protest to her mother that she had had nothing to do with her enemy's dismissal (for she sometimes told a lie), but in fact her responsibility was equalled only by the King's weakness.

Further, Vergennes, whose policy was successful, nearly lost his Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also "on account of the Comte de Guines." Mercy realised how astonished Marie Theresa would be and he explained: "The key to this enigma can be found in the Queen's associates, who are banded together in favour of the Comte de Guines. They manage to arouse her *amour-propre*, to irritate her, to blacken those who, for the sake of the general good, might resist her wishes. In fact, they are so successful in putting the Queen beside herself and in intoxicating her with dissipation that, given also the King's extreme compliance, there are times when it is quite impossible for reason to break through."

The Ambassador considered as particularly harmful the Queen's decision to appoint Madame de Polignac's husband "reversioner" of the Comte de Tessé, her First Equerry. "H.M. imagines that she has paid tribute to friendship, but the public sees in it only blind infatuation for the Comtesse de Polignac, who at the moment is completely in the ascendant." Again, he complained: "The late Queen had only 150 horses. When M. de Polignac has bought those he has to have as reversioner, the Queen's stable will have 300 horses and the expenses will be 200,000 livres more than in the time of the late Queen."

The poor man thought that was all, but he did not know everything. He knew nothing of the positive looting the Comte de Polignac was to engage in. Although he was unaware of these details, Mirabeau was in the right when he exclaimed: "One thousand crowns to the Assas family for having saved the State one million to the Polignac family for having saved the

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

Marie Antoinette's credit with the public was already much diminished. At the beginning of the autumn of 1776 the cheers were much less enthusiastic and they became even fainter after the stay at Fontainebleau in October and November, when the notorious races organised by the Comte d'Artois and the Duc de Chartres took place.

Although Louis XVI disapproved of his wife's passion for horseracing, he tolerated gambling, although it was forbidden elsewhere. The King himself did not play.

"I can understand your playing heavily," he said to one of the gamblers, "you are playing with your own money, but I should be playing with other people's."

Marie Antoinette did not grasp this distinction and plunged recklessly. She even persuaded her weak husband to get someone from Paris to hold the bank at faro.

Inevitably, Mercy one day found the Queen anxious and "worried about the state of her debts, of whose total she was not herself aware." The diplomat turned into an accountant and, although the Queen's allowance had recently been doubled, found a tidy deficit of 487,272 livres—100 million francs. The Queen was "somewhat surprised" but showed no signs of panic.

Marie Antoinette's insensibility in this matter was more excusable. The expenditure all around her appeared to have been instituted and regulated by a madman. On opening some of the files in the National Archives one feels obliged to read every item twice, for fear of having misunderstood. The Queen's personal apothecary received the sum of 2,000 livres a year for his drugs, whether Marie Antoinette was ill or not. The army of domestic servants was given a yearly travelling allowance even if no moves were made. "Charities, gifts and pensions" for Marie Antoinette's Household alone amounted to 867,383 livres, 18 sols, 11 deniers—or 175 million francs.

Somewhat embarrassed, Marie Antoinette decided, on Mercy's advice, to speak to her husband. Just as he had allowed faro, tolerated the "swarm of young people," permitted the dissipation and granted the Ministerial portfolios, Louis

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

XVI now declared to the Queen "without hesitation and with the best possible grace," that he would pay her debts out of his own pocket. There was not a complaint or a word of reproach. "This indulgence of the King's, which covers everything, is extremely unfortunate," Mercy declared. But Louis XVI had an excuse, and it was Maria Theresa who guessed it from afar. The King preferred to shut his eyes so that his wife—who was still not yet his wife—"may not become attached to other, less suitable, pleasures."

Having so much to be forgiven, Louis XVI became more and more indulgent. He ordered the number of balls, entertainments, games and spectacles to be doubled. During carnival time in 1777, as Marie Antoinette realised and Mercy confirmed, he urged his wife to go as often as possible to the Opera, although she behaved there "with an air of familiarity to which the public would never be accustomed." Neither did it become accustomed to see its sovereign indulge, under the walls of Paris this time, in the "pell mell" and rowdiness of the Fontainebleau races. Parisian society, too, did not become accustomed to travelling fruitlessly to Versailles to pay court. The reception days were unchanged, but Marie Antoinette, whose moods were very uncertain, would change her mind at the last minute, and Paris began to hold aloof from its sovereign's invitations. The favourites reigned as never before. Mme de Polignac and M. de Coigny were at the height of their power.

In July 1777 Louis XVI finally made up his mind. "No doubt his self-esteem conquered," writes Dr. Ganière, "and enabled the King to overcome his repugnance for the knife." It was a mild enough operation in itself, but very cruel when one thinks that it was carried out with no help from anaesthetics. Louis XVI, proud of his endurance, bravely looked forward to achievements of which he had merely dreamed for the last seven years. The revelation took place. In spite of the long delay neither of the two partners seemed disappointed. Louis

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

and I am sorry to have been deprived of it for so long." And Marie Antoinette confided to Mme Campan: "I am now experiencing the most important happiness of my life." And yet, when one thinks of it, although during an August night in 1777 when Marie Antoinette at last became true Queen of France, the reality must have been very different from what her thoughts had idealised.

Marie Antoinette soon admitted it to one of her "associates": "I should be neither grieved nor very annoyed if the King were to develop a passing and temporary attachment, as he might thereby acquire more vitality and energy."

As a result of the King's lack of skill and experience the operation, which should also have appeased the Queen's thirst for pleasure, brought about no change in her behaviour.

The passion for gambling had become sheer madness. In vain Mercy told the Queen that "as the government recognised the danger of games of chance and was attempting to check their spread, it was unheard of and scandalous that these very games should be admitted by the Queen, particularly when they occupied those moments which should be given to etiquette." The only reply he obtained was: "I am afraid of being bored."

And play continued. "It is the one subject," wrote Mercy, "on which she will admit no protest. On 25 October 1777 H.M. had lost her last crown. On the next day she ordered her treasurer to bring her her November allowance, which was also consumed in a few days, without counting a debt of 500 louis which is still not paid." Marie Antoinette was enjoying herself more than ever and would not listen to any cries of alarm. She made a wager of 100,00 francs, which would be 20 millions today, that the Comte d'Artois would not manage to have a château built in the Bois de Boulogne in six weeks, during the stay at Fontainebleau. The future Charles X accepted the challenge and declared that he would give a feast in the Queen's honour at Bagatelle—as the little château was called—before the return to Versailles. He won his wager thanks to 900 la-

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

thing was," Mercy sighed, "that as there was a lack of building materials, particularly freestone, lime and plaster, and no time could be lost in looking for them, M. le Comte d'Artois gave orders that patrols of the Swiss Guards should search the high roads and seize all the carts they found loaded with the above-mentioned materials. The price of the materials was paid right away, but as the goods had already been sold to other individuals, there was a kind of compulsion in this method which revolted public opinion. No one can understand how the King can allow such flightiness and unfortunately it is also supposed that it would not be tolerated without the protection accorded by the Queen. H.M. often deigns to assure me that she is very far from approving the rashness of the Prince her brother-in-law, but that she has no means of stopping his misconduct. The Queen speaks truly on the first point, of which I have had many proofs, but as regards the second point, the one way of preventing the Comte d'Artois's disorderly conduct would be to refuse to attend the pleasure parties which cause it."

But Marie Antoinette did not refuse. She visited the little château. We do not know if her brother-in-law showed her the entresol adorned with frescoes and high-reliefs among which the Marquis de Sade would have been quite at home, but the public was convinced of it.

At the beginning of 1778 France, which had for a long time fought for the King of Prussia, very nearly had to fight for the Emperor of Austria. The Elector of Bavaria, Maximilian Joseph, had died on 30 December 1777 and Joseph II, who saw in this the long-awaited opportunity to seize Bavaria, made great play with rights going back to the fifteenth century.

The Queen's first fear on hearing of the death of the Elector was that her brother would be "up to his tricks." He soon was, and 12,000 men were sent to occupy Lower Bavaria, a "district" claimed by Austria.

"This rounding off of territory is of inestimable value," de-

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

may be able to bring it off without a war!" He meant without a war against Prussia, which would acquiesce in the "rounding off" if France showed itself "firm in the Alliance" and if Marie Antoinette were willing to support the Austrian view. Mercy pressed the Queen. She must act and speak to the King. The Abbé de Vermond seconded him. Maria Theresa, who at the bottom of her heart did not approve of her son's action, acknowledged her daughter's "critical position."

But events moved fast. In March the King of Prussia made an official protest against the Hapsburg claims and demanded the withdrawal of the Austrian troops from the Bavarian districts. Maria Theresa, frightened by the gravity of the situation, no longer recommended prudence to her daughter and begged her openly to support Mercy, who was to ask France to fulfill the treaty of 1765: in the event of aggression the King was to supply the Emperor with 24,000 men or with money.

Between 20 and 25 March, as a result of the urgent and almost daily prompting of Mercy, Marie Antoinette decided to take action and summoned Maurepas and Vergennes. "I spoke to them with some force and I think I made an impression on them, particularly the latter. I was not very pleased with the arguments of these gentlemen, who are only trying to compromise and to accustom the King to do the same."

The "arguments of these gentlemen" in reply to her pro-Austrian language had been clear: France could consider intervention only in the event of the King of Prussia threatening the Low Countries. This was also the King's opinion.

But a "long-awaited, long hoped-for" event was to enable Marie Antoinette to act with new authority and to oblige the royal Government to take up its attitude in accordance with the wishes of Vienna. Marie Antoinette was at last expecting a child.

On 20 April 1778 Maurepas and Vergennes sent a rather "sharp" dispatch to Vienna, informing Austria that it could not count on France. Strong in her "increased credit" Marie An-



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

as I heard of it. It is extraordinary what a gift the Ministers here have for drowning affairs in a flood of words. Nevertheless, after everything Mercy had told me, and as a result of the reflections which I cannot help constantly making on the most important event of my life, I pressed them so hard that they were obliged to alter their tone somewhat. They have sufficiently admitted their mistake as regards this wretched dispatch."

"As a result of the fear instilled in them by the Queen" the Ministers reversed their position on 26 April and formally guaranteed the safety of the Low Countries. If Frederick should attack Austria in the Belgian Provinces he would find the French troops at the side of Joseph II's army.

Shortly after midnight on 19 December 1778 the Queen awoke with a start: her first pains were beginning. Once more Marie Antoinette was to be a victim to the tyranny of etiquette. At the end of the morning, when the accoucheur cried: "The Queen is about to give birth!" the crowd of curious people who poured into the room was so unruly, as is related by Mme Campan and confirmed by Mercy, "that it nearly caused the death of the Queen."

The Paris municipality, which had been assembled since five o'clock in the morning, received the news of the birth of Madame Royale at half-past twelve. Admittedly a Dauphin had been hoped for, but the rejoicing was not diminished. The event proved that Marie Antoinette and Louis could have children, and this was all that mattered.

On Monday, 8 February, Paris was in a ferment from early morning. The city was to receive the King and Queen. Previously 100 poor girls were married to whom Marie Antoinette gave a dowry corresponding to 100,000 present-day francs. The betrothed, with their hair "curled and arranged," went to their parish priest. The wedding parties then piled into the city coaches and drove to Notre Dame where the hundred couples

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

But in spite of this sight, in spite of the liberation of 132 prisoners, in spite of the buffets of cold meat, in spite of the fireworks and the illuminated fountain, Paris's welcome was icy. From Notre Dame to Sainte-Geneviève, from Sainte-Geneviève to the Place Louis XV, there were only a few shouts. In certain quarters the gilded procession passed through a double rank of completely silent idlers.

Marie Antoinette was furious. Mercy tried to explain to her that "the idea of her dissipation and the expense she caused, and finally the appearance of an excessive love of amusement in a time of calamity and war might combine to estrange people's minds and required a little tact."

The Queen agreed. She promised to change her way of life and "to renounce too conspicuous amusements."

## Less Conspicuous Amusements

IN AUGUST OF THE PRECEDING YEAR when Axel Fersen had arrived at Versailles, Marie Antoinette had recognised him at once: "Ah! Here is an old acquaintance!"

Although naturally modest, Axel was obliged to realise that he pleased the Queen, and the inevitable happened: he fell in love with Marie Antoinette. For her part the Queen felt drawn to this rather melancholy young man of 23. She was not yet in love with him, but expressed a lively affection for him. Axel's favour increased. "If there were anything which might cause it to be thought excessive," the Queen's page, the Baron de Jilly, later wrote, "it was a more restrained and respectful attitude which perhaps partook somewhat of the affectation of a courtier. . . . But M. de Fersen is not at all affected and all his art is in simplicity."

The feeling which he thus carefully concealed within his heart became so violent that Fersen decided to flee and signed an engagement with one of the expeditions which were then being prepared for America.

Versailles was thunderstruck. "What! sir, are you deserting your conquest?" Axel replied simply: "If I had made one, I should not desert it, but I am going without leaving any regrets behind me."

The announcement of this forthcoming departure made Marie Antoinette realise that, according to the expression of the time, she had an "inclination" towards the Swedish officer. When he came to take his leave "she could not take her eyes off him," a witness recounts, and "as she watched him they filled with tears."

But it was a false alarm. After a long wait at Le Havre the

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

Versailles. Although he did not ask for any post, thanks to the Queen he was appointed supernumerary officer to the regiment of the Royal Deux Ponts. Some of Marie Antoinette's associates began to find the Swede's attitude much less "restrained" and the officer wrote to his father: "The kindness she has shown me and this post of colonel have won me the jealousy of all the young men at court."

At Trianon Axel was invited to the intimate receptions. One evening the Queen, with obvious meaning, sang verses from the opera *Dido*:

Ah! I was well inspired  
When I received you at my court.

Twenty-six years later, on hearing *Dido* performed at the Opera in Stockholm, Axel exclaimed: "How many memories and painful regrets does this opera recall to my heart!"

According to the Comte de Saint-Priest, "Mme de Polignac did not oppose her friend's preference. No doubt Vaudreuil and Besenval schemed for her because an isolated foreigner who was not very enterprising suited them much better than would a Frenchman, surrounded by relatives, who might win all the favours instead of themselves and perhaps end as head of a clique which would eclipse them all. The Queen was thus encouraged to follow her inclination, and she indulged in it without much prudence."

So as not to compromise the Queen any further Axel once more did all he could to go and fight in America. Finally, in March 1780, he was appointed aide-de-camp to General Rochambeau and he embarked.

The Swedish Ambassador, boasting to Gustavus III of this "wisdom and prudence beyond his years," added: "Incidentally, the Queen is behaving with much more circumspection and wisdom than formerly."

Marie Antoinette had given Mercy her promise and this time she kept it. Two things helped her: the birth of Madame

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

and 1780 were certainly a decisive turning-point in Marie Antoinette's life. The whirlwind ceased and the classic countenance of the Queen of Trianon so dear to her later admirers appeared. It was at this time that Marie Antoinette left off the feathers of which she had been inordinately fond and wore instead "shepherdess hats" of simple straw. During this year she ordered 93 dresses, 41 formal dresses and 56 coats, but for all that everything was in "the simple style" for which Trianon was the ideal setting.

The year 1780 "marks the most interesting period in the history of Trianon," according to Pierre de Nolhac. Life went on in the "simplest" possible way. When the Queen entered the drawing-room the piano did not stop playing, the ladies' tapestry frames continued to work and the men did not break off their game of billiards or backgammon. The women wore dresses of white muslin with gauze fichus and straw hats. The men wore dress coats or long coats of cloth, the colour of "London soot," and lightened only by a collar of scarlet velvet.

Unfortunately Marie Antoinette was reproached for playing at the lady of the manor. Too many people were excluded. In June even the ladies of honour remained at Versailles. As for the King, he occasionally came to dinner. Five years of reign had not polished him, and he still possessed "no more gallantry in his manner," which was a great grievance to this dying society.

Sometimes, after dinner, the guests wandered in the famous garden of which all Europe was talking. The Hamlet was not built until later, but in the summer of 1780 the gardens were nearly finished. In 1780, too, the papier-mâché theatre at Trianon was completed. Marie Antoinette was the leader of a "troupe" composed of Madame Elisabeth, her young sister-in-law, who was now one of her friends, the Comte d'Artois and the coterie—the now Duchesse de Polignac, her daughter "Guichette," her sister-in-law Comtesse Diane de Polignac, the Comte Esterhazy, Adhémar, Crussol and Vaudreuil.

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

shadowed by the economies of Necker, Turgot's successor. "I want to bring order and economy into every part of my household," Louis XVI had declared. "If anyone has any objections I shall break them!"

Marie Antoinette was one of those who had objections. She is said to have warned Necker "that she did not care to manage her house in the style of the Rue Saint-Denis and to carry the keys of the cellar in her pocket."

Necker realised that his task would not be easy—in the following spring he abandoned it—but meanwhile, in default of large savings, he launched his famous loans, the interest on which encumbered the Treasury with a heavy burden which finally crushed it once and for all.

The coterie plucked up courage—it was not much affected by the plans of the Director-General of Finances—but late in 1780 the spectacles at the Trianon were interrupted by the death of Maria Theresa.

Since mid-November the great Empress had been seriously ill with "a hardening of the lungs." She retained consciousness until the end. On 29 November she sighed: "This is my last day!"

At Versailles the Abbé Vermond was entrusted by Louis XVI with breaking the news to Marie Antoinette. The Queen was overwhelmed. Her tears flowed faster when she learned that 48 hours before her death her mother had given her blessing to her absent children. Raising her hands to heaven, she had named each in turn: Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany, Maria-Cristina, Duchess of Saxe-Teschen, Amelia, Duchess of Parma, Maria-Carolina, Queen of Sicily and Naples. Then, after a moment's silence, she had almost shouted the last name: "Marie Antoinette, Queen of France!" And she had burst into sobs.

Since 31 July 1775, when the Empress had written to Mercy from Schoenbrunn: "My daughter is hastening to her ruin," she knew there was no hope. Marie Antoinette, in the Empress's own expression, was "hurrying to destruction." Maria Theresa had not complained about the environment of the

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

with her astonishing clear-sightedness she had not concealed her anxiety at the dangerous void Marie Antoinette had brought about at court so as to remain with her dear friends. In her last letter to Mercy, on 3 November, she had approved and judged "very sound" the observations the Ambassador had thought it his duty to make to Marie Antoinette on her return from Trianon: "A great court must be accessible to many people, otherwise hatred and jealousy turn everyone's heads and give rise to complaints, dislike and a kind of estrangement."

Marie Antoinette had in fact promised her mother to stop being merely "Queen of Trianon." But, unfortunately, it was too late and the "kind of estrangement" Mercy had spoken of had taken place. Her coterie had finally kept at a distance all who might surround the throne in case of danger. Marie Antoinette did not yet realise this isolation. The great machine was still in motion and its wheels hardly creaked. But during ten years at Versailles and six years of reign the Queen had succeeded in estranging for ever all those she had ignored, those she had despised, those she had mocked, those who were not among her beloved "associates," those who seemed to her too old, those who had come so many times to Versailles without getting a glimpse of their sovereign, those to whom she refused to speak and above all those who had been her friends, her companions of pleasure and whom she now ignored, such as the Duc de Chartres, the future regicide, who was already the centre of a group. Marie Antoinette had not even defended him after the Battle of Ouessant, where his conduct as commodore had been despicable. It was even said that she had sided with the jesters who did not spare the Duke with jokes about his "cowardice." Moreover, in July 1779, in order to spare him "the severity of an order from the King," the Queen had written to him advising him to leave the army, and return to the Palais Royal. The Duc de Chartres obeyed but in 1780 the Palais Royal clan was already attracting the malcontents and opposing itself to that of Trianon. While waiting to send each other to the scaffold they

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

gence, mentioned by certain historians, is no more than a pious legend! When she finally opened her eyes and understood, she was in a cell in the Conciergerie and the executioner was binding her hands.

In 1781 Marie Antoinette was pregnant for the second time. She would be 26 on 2 November. What had become of the little Archduchess with the slender bosom and childish eyes? She now possessed what, on a throne, is better than flawless beauty—the bearing of a Queen. Looking at her portraits we can realise the defects in this face, which was yet so attractive: a forehead too broad, a rather thick nose, short-sighted eyes and a heavy chin. With age the famous Austrian lip had become more pronounced. But what would mar another face is hardly noticeable here.

"She was then at the height of her youth and beauty," wrote Mme Vigée-Lebrun, who had watched her for many hours as she painted her. "Marie Antoinette was tall, beautifully made, rather plump, but not too much so. Her arms were superb, her hands small and perfectly shaped and her feet charming. She walked better than any woman in France, holding her head high with a majesty which made one recognise the sovereign among all her court. . . . Her features were not regular. She had inherited from her family the long, narrow oval, peculiar to the Austrians. But what was most remarkable in her face was the radiance of her complexion. I have never seen any so brilliant, and brilliant is the word, for her skin was so transparent that it held no shadows. For this reason I could never reproduce it as I wished. I had no colours to paint that freshness, those fine shades which could be seen only in that charming face and which I have never found in any other woman."

Louis XVI, in the whole of his lifetime, wrote two narratives: one page concerning the birth of Madame Royale and two sheets recounting the Queen's confinement on 22 October 1781. Let us have it in his words: "The Queen had a very good night from 21 to 22 October. She was in the best of health."



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

she woke, but they did not prevent her from taking her bath. She left it at half-past ten. The pains continued slight. I gave orders for the shoot I was to have held at Saclé only at midday. Between noon and half-past the pains increased. She lay down on her delivery bed and at exactly a quarter-past one by my watch she was successfully delivered of a boy. During her labour there were in the room only Mme de Lamballe, Monsieur, the Comte d'Artois, my aunts, Mme de Chimay, Mme de Mailly, Mme d'Ossun, Mme de Tavannes and Mme de Guéménée, who took turns to go into the Salon de la Paix, which had been left empty. In the *Grand Cabinet* were my Household and the Queen's, the *grandes entrées*, and the sub-governors, who entered when the final pains began and stood at the back of the room so as not to impede the air."

Infinitely preferable to this official report is the extract from a letter to King Gustavus of Sweden from M. de Stedingk, Fersen's friend: "After a quarter of an hour's suspense one of the Queen's women, all dishevelled and excited, entered and cried: 'A Dauphin! But you must not mention it yet.'

"The Queen's antechamber presented a charming sight. Everyone's joy was at its height and all heads were turned. People who hardly knew each other laughed and wept by turns. Men and women fell on each other's necks and even those who cared least for the Queen were carried away by the general rejoicing. But it was very different an hour after the birth, when the two doors of the Queen's room were opened and M. le Dauphin was announced. Mme de Guéménée [who occupied the post of governess of the children of France], beaming with joy, held him in her arms and was wheeled across the apartments in her armchair to take him to her rooms. Everyone wanted to touch the child, or even just the chair. A crowd followed him, adoring. When he had arrived in his apartments, an Archbishop wanted to decorate him with a blue ribbon, but the King said he should first of all be a Christian. The baptism took place at three o'clock in the afternoon.

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

for fear of arousing too strong an emotion. Everyone around her held in their feelings so well that the Queen, seeing only constraint about her, thought it was a daughter. She said: 'You see how reasonable I am. I have asked no questions.'

"Seeing her anxiety, the King thought it was time to reassure her. With tears in his eyes he said: 'M. le Dauphin begs to enter.'

"They brought her the child and those who witnessed the scene say they have never seen anything so touching. She said to Mme de Guéménée, who took the child: 'Take him, he belongs to the State, but I now take back my daughter.'"

In Paris the "Gentlemen" [the first and second councillors of the city], the ushers and the Governor took part in the traditional ceremonies. The tocsin rang without ceasing for three days and nights, money was distributed to the people, buffets were set out under the wind and for two days all work in Paris was stopped.

On Friday 26 October the "Gentlemen" went in ceremonial dress to Notre Dame, where a *Te Deum* was sung in the King's presence. Two days later they again put on their robes and went by carriage to Versailles to inform His Majesty of their wish to admire the Dauphin. Louis XVI granted them this favour. The "Gentlemen" bowed and "advanced towards Monseigneur, who was in his cradle, and the Mayor offered congratulations on behalf of the city." On Tuesday 31 October the city authorities returned to congratulate Marie Antoinette.

Paris then considered it had done enough. Times were hard and the capital would have preferred to postpone the festivities, *Te Deum* and entries until the fine weather. The city's finances were in a bad state. During the preceding year seven Princes or Princesses allied to the royal family had died. Admittedly, the King was generous enough each time to present the "Gentlemen" with a "mourning robe" with weepers, but all this mourning had cost the city a great deal, 2,700 to 3,000 livres for each death.

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

M. de Caumartin, the Mayor, was of the opinion that on this occasion the rejoicings could be postponed until later. Feasts in the middle of winter were twice as expensive, and besides there was already a shortage of bread. But Marie Antoinette asked laughingly if they were waiting until Monseigneur was old enough to dance at the ball to be given in the Hôtel de Ville and the "Gentlemen" obeyed. The feast would take place on the 21 and 23 January. But the citizens, who were at close quarters with the poverty in the city, grumbled, and the rejoicings started badly.

Some precautions were therefore taken. The simplest consisted in increasing the number of charcoal braziers, buffets and orchestras so as to disperse the ordinary people and prevent them from gathering in a mass before the Hôtel de Ville, where the fireworks were to be set off.

By the morning of 21 January everything was ready. The weather was superb. At the Porte de la Conférence the Governor, according to custom, knelt on one knee to make his speech to the Queen, and Marie Antoinette "replied with all her own particular grace."

This time Paris's welcome was as it should be. It was, of course, far from the wild applause at the beginning of the reign, but as the Queen had assured the succession people wanted to show their joy.

Two days later the masked ball took place. It was the last great festivity of the old régime. Thirteen thousand people had been invited. More than twice as many came and complete confusion reigned over the evening. Marie Antoinette, who came although she was not expected, was nearly suffocated. The buffets were rifled and every corner of the Hôtel de Ville invaded. On the same day the indefatigable Mayor and four magistrates went to Versailles to thank the King and Queen, and much to M. de Caumartin's relief, they received 30,000 livres to cover part of the expenses.

On 30 January M. de Caumartin was again at Versailles to

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

"stroll about" at the ball given to the Queen in the opera house of the château by the bodyguards, still in honour of the Dauphin's birth.

"Have you come to learn how to give a party?" a masked figure asked him, bursting into laughter.

It had to be admitted that the evening was particularly successful. Marie Antoinette opened the ball at five in the afternoon with M. de Moret, the oldest bodyguard. At six o'clock the guards let in the common people and showed them to the buffet "which contributed not a little to their applause expressed by cries of 'Ah! that's good!' and clinkings of glasses accompanied by 'Long live the King! Long live the Queen! Long live M. le Dauphin and all the family!'" At eight o'clock the people were shown out and the bodyguards sat down to eat.

The evening was not yet over, for the masked ball was yet to come. "His Majesty was overcome by sleep and went to bed at half-past eleven." Marie Antoinette stayed, and enjoyed herself. She was still fond of balls but considered that at her age—she was not yet thirty—she ought not to dance as much as she used. Ah! those balls given by the Queen! In fifty years' time the last supporters of Charles X, exiled in Prague, would speak of them with emotion.

At the end of the summer of 1782 her children's education caused Marie Antoinette a great deal of worry, M. de Guéménée's startling insolvency—33 million livres—forced the Princesse to give in her resignation. Who should replace her? Marie Antoinette thought of the pious Princesse de Chimay or the learned Duchesse de Duras. But Besenval was on the watch—the Queen must nominate Mme de Polignac. "Any other nomination would give the idea that Your Majesty no longer had enough influence to have the post given to her best friend."

The Swiss was clever, and he had touched the Queen on a sensitive spot. She interceded and, naturally, the King yielded. One can imagine the murmurs of the public. Marie Antoinette was to be very much blamed for this appointment. but she con-

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

to supervise her children's education—in particular that of her daughter—without the risk of wounding the governess's vanity.”

The little Marie Thérèse—Madame Royale—never left her mother's rooms, and every “important or serious business,” as Mercy wrote to Joseph II on 28 December 1782, “is interrupted by the little incidents of the royal child's games, and this inconvenience so chimes with the Queen's natural disposition to be superficial and inattentive that she hardly listens to what is said to her, and understands even less! . . . Consequently I find myself kept more at arm's length than ever.”

With all respect to the Ambassador, that was a good thing. To draw Marie Antoinette into the question of the free navigation of the Scheldt, so dear to Joseph II, or into the eternal Austro-Prussian quarrels, would have harmed the Queen a great deal in public opinion. We shall see this later.

“One can no longer calculate the effects of the Queen's vacillating ideas,” wrote Mercy in the same letter. But this vacillation had its good side, for in spite of the new favour granted to the “clan,” the great “passion” had lessened somewhat. Marie Antoinette had found a new friend—Geneviève de Gramont, Comtesse d'Ossun, her Mistress of the Robes.

This time one may be thankful for Marie Antoinette's “vagaries of affection,” which always upset Mercy. Mme d'Ossun was not an intriguer and never asked for money. She received in all less than 10,000 livres.

Marie Antoinette's wardrobe was a real Ministry, and Mme d'Ossun had a large staff under her. “Everything was under her authority,” wrote Mme Campan, “and nothing was released without her signature, from shoes to suits embroidered at Lyons. . . .” The Mistress of the Robes was scared by her mistress's expenditure. For clothes there was a budget of 120,000 livres, which was never enough. In 1776 a supplement of 28,000 livres was required, in 1780 one of 74,118. In 1783 Mme d'Ossun had to ask the treasurer for 73,067. “This deficit is the work of Mlle Bertin, among others,” wrote Mme d'Ossun,

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

the Comtesse's *bête noire*. Rose Bertin delivered directly to the Queen, instead of to the wardrobe. She sent in her bill three or four months later and "no one could remember anything about it . . . which means that one is often forced to agree in her invoices to things which one has neither seen nor used, and to pay for them without even being sure that they were furnished." Mlle Bertin's prices were "exorbitant." She actually asked 6,000 livres for a ball gown for New Year's Day—1,200,000 francs for a dress.

The Queen did not feel in the least guilty about this prodigality which distressed her new friend.

How should she feel guilty, since when she wished a simple way of life she was reproached with that too? Witness Mme Vigée-Lebrun's picture of the Queen in a *gaulle*, a kind of blouse made fashionable by the creoles of Santo Domingo, which was exhibited in the Salon of 1783. People gathered before the picture to see Marie Antoinette "dressed as a chamber-maid." She wanted to ruin the silk merchants and weavers of Lyons in favour of the Flemish drapers, her brother's subjects. The picture was given a title: "France, under the features of Austria, reduced to covering herself with a rag."

The Queen, annoyed, had the portrait withdrawn. Since, on the one hand, Calonne asked it of her and, on the other, the public thought she was ruining the country's textile industry by dressing in batiste and muslin, why should she worry? And the wardrobe expenses mounted sharply from 199,957 livres in 1783 to 217,652 in 1784 and 258,002 in 1785. Although "less conspicuous," her amusements were none the less ruinous.

One afternoon towards the end of June 1783 Marie Antoinette was playing the harp in her gilded drawing-room when an usher scratched at the door. A moment later Axel Fersen stood before her. How changed he was! "As handsome as an angel" when he left for America, he had "aged by ten years." The Queen stopped playing and gave him her hand to kiss.

It was certainly not the last time.

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

Antoinette that had preyed upon the "supernumerary" colonel, but the fatigues of war. During these three years spent in America he had certainly not forgotten his "conquest," but it would be ridiculous to try to make an inconsolable lover out of him. Before embarking for France he had even considered renewing, on his return, his plans for marriage with an Englishwoman, Miss Leijel.

But then he met Marie Antoinette again. A month after his return, hearing that Miss Leijel had married during his absence, Axel wrote to his sister Sophie and confessed his love for the Queen. "I am very glad that Miss Leijel is married. She will not be mentioned to me again, and I hope no one else will be found. I have made up my mind. *I cannot belong to the one person to whom I should wish to belong, the one who really loves me, and so I wish to belong to no one.*"

Marie Antoinette seemed to have renewed her "inclination" and soon Axel had but one wish: to remain in France and obtain from Louis XVI the command of a foreign regiment. The proprietor of the Royal Swedish, Comte Alexandre de Sparre, was ready to sell it to him for 100,000 livres. Axel spoke to his father, asking him to help pay this sum, which would allow him to remain for part of the year at Versailles, and begging him to consent to "the one thing which can make me happy for ever." But Senator Fersen replied in a stern letter: "I would willingly consent to your scheme, if I did not see in it a physical impossibility. Neither you nor I have the necessary capital."

Fortunately King Gustavus intervened and asked Louis XVI to grant a commission to Count Fersen "who has served in Your Majesty's armies in America to the approbation of all and has thus rendered himself worthy of your benevolence." On 20 September Marie Antoinette also wrote to the King of Sweden to assure him that she would "omit nothing to second the wishes of her brother and cousin."

Axel had by that time left Paris and was on his way to join

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

name of Count de Haga and had asked Axel to accompany him. On 9 November he noted in his correspondence book: "(Wrote) to the Queen to thank her for the regiment."

On 7 June 1784 Count de Haga and his suite arrived at Versailles. The visit lasted six weeks. "We are in a whirl of feasts, pleasures and entertainments of every kind," Axel wrote to his father. "We are constantly occupied and always in a hurry. We never have time to do everything arranged for us. We have already had a grand opera at Versailles and a state ball, not to mention numerous dinners and suppers. Tomorrow there is a feast in the Queen's large garden at Trianon."

The "inclination" was to become a "passion." Feasts and distractions did not make Marie Antoinette forget that Fersen had no fortune and before he left for Sweden Axel was given 20,000 livres a year income in his capacity as colonel of a French regiment.

At each stage of the long journey Axel was in continuous correspondence with Marie Antoinette. "Farewell, my dear Rignon," she ended on one occasion—this was her name for him—"I kiss you tenderly."

Axel thought only of returning to France. During the winter of 1784-5 the talk was all of a possible war with the Low Countries, a war in which France, and consequently Axel's regiment, would be involved. Moreover, the fighting would have been against Austria, and from a distance he could imagine Marie Antoinette's distress.

Once more it was the Mouths of the Scheldt which threatened to set Europe aflame. The Netherlands had been in possession of the Mouths of the Scheldt since 1460—in fact they still are—and they kept the estuary closed, much to the fury of Joseph II, who would have liked France to intervene with the Dutch. Louis XVI and Vergennes, having been at peace with England for a year, knew perfectly well that to make the Scheldt an Austrian river would displease both London and Berlin. So when on 1 September 1784 Marie Antoinette, at



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

Mercy's instigation, brought up the question of the Scheldt with Vergennes, the Minister prudently replied that "the court of Versailles could not lay down the law for the Dutch." Learning of this, Joseph II was extremely annoyed and wrote to his sister: "It is quite certain that M. de Vergennes' conduct is hardly calculated to strengthen, or indeed even to maintain, the bonds of alliance and policy which united us."

Not maintain the Alliance! All Maria Theresa's work would crumble, and consequently Marie Antoinette began a campaign against Vergennes.

An event took place which enabled Marie Antoinette to revive the affair. As the Dutch continued to refuse to free the Scheldt estuary, Joseph II ordered one of his ships to leave Antwerp and to force a passage. On 4 October the Austrian ship, a brigantine called *Le Louis*, was fired on not far from the mouth of the river, opposite Saftingen.

The Emperor mobilised an army of 80,000 men to avenge the outrage, and to complete matters the United Provinces asked for Louis XVI's protection. Mercy and Joseph II insisted that the Queen should act "energetically."

During all this time, it must be sadly admitted, she was much more her brother's Minister than Queen of France. It is somewhat embarrassing to read the congratulations Mercy bestowed on his master's sister for her "true zeal" in the service of His Austrian Majesty. Urged on by her monitor, Marie Antoinette finally obtained what she wanted: in a note France promised not to declare war on Austria in the event of a conflict between Joseph II and the United Provinces and to confine itself to sending "an army to watch the frontier."

The Dutch, feeling themselves abandoned, gave in. They would send an embassy to Vienna and apologise for firing on the brigantine. They would also pay a reasonably indemnity, and France, which had had nothing to do with the firing, promised to pay a share.

This was the beginning of the legend of the cases of gold

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

crossing the frontier and of the famous 200 million sent by Marie Antoinette to her brother to enable him to make war against the Turks.

The Parisians knew that France's disgraceful attitude in the affair of the Netherlands and the tithe paid to the Emperor were both the Queen's doing. Henceforth they always called her the "Austrian," a nickname she was to keep right up to the scaffold.

In the spring of 1785 it was quite usual to hear the public say: "We are going to Saint Cloud to see the waters and the Austrian." For since 20 February Marie Antoinette was the owner of the château of Saint Cloud, which the King had bought from the Duc d'Orléans for the attractive sum of six million. One may guess the cries and murmurs of the opposition—for one can already use that term: "So the mania for English gardens is beginning again!" And a councillor exclaimed in Parliament: "It is both impolitic and immoral for palaces to belong to a Queen of France."

When, on 24 May, Marie Antoinette made her entry into Paris after giving birth to her second son, she received no applause whatsoever. Fersen, who had just arrived in Paris, wrote sadly to King Gustavus: "The Queen was received very coldly. There was not a single cry of welcome, but a complete silence."

On returning to Versailles she wept for a long time in Louis XVI's arms. For the first time she realised how deep was the gulf separating her from the French, but the motives for this icy reception escaped her. "What have I done to them? What have I done to them?" she asked through her sobs.

## Madame Defecit

WHEN MARIE ANTOINETTE gave birth to her fourth child, Princesse Sophie, on 9 July 1786, the only people who rejoiced were those Parisians who had free drinks at the expense of the "Gentlemen."

The people often suffered from hunger and knew that at Versailles the money was still flying. Calonne was reigning as Minister. During this year Marie Antoinette spent 272,000 livres on dress, 60 million present-day francs and 150,000 livres in excess of her budget. Since the beginning of the reign Monsieur had extracted 3,000 million present-day francs and the Comte d'Artois 2,400 million. When these figures were shown to M. de Calonne he was delighted. He borrowed "to spend," he borrowed again, he went on borrowing. He was called "The Wizard."

"How could I have suspected that the finances were in such a bad state?" Marie Antoinette was later to ask. "When I asked for 50,000 livres I was brought 100,000."

At the end of 1786 the "Wizard," who had come to the end of his tricks, collapsed. There was only one solution left—to summon an assembly of notables and ask them to find a way to fill the coffers without spending other people's money. The monarchy had gone bankrupt and filed its petition.

Calonne showed his books to all the Marshals, Dukes, Peers, magistrates and Princes, and now all France knew what Versailles was costing the nation. Poor devils who earned barely one livre a day learned that Madame Elisabeth alone ate each year 100 million francs' worth of meat and fish. A scapegoat was needed. It could not be the King, who was so good natured and so simple. It was not the costly and outdated ceremonial

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

age, the 2,111 servants and 4,000 members of the King's Household. One person alone, it was shouted and written, was responsible—the Queen. The deficit was due to her wild expenditure, her pleasures, her gambling, the greed and thefts of her favourites. Henceforth she was to be known as "Madame Deficit." In her own person she was held to be the incarnation of the bankruptcy of the monarchy. Marie Antoinette.

As Louis XVI had been obliged to let Calonne go, Marie Antoinette suggested the Archbishop of Toulouse, Loménie de Brienne, who was supported by Vermond. Louis XVI gave way and the Queen rejoiced. "Make no mistake, Messieurs," she said as she left the Council Chamber, "he is a real Prime Minister."

Those with privileges were soon to be aware of it, but to their cost. As Brienne had not been able to obtain from the 144 Notables permission to reform the financial structure of the country completely, and consequently increase certain taxes, he fell back on the court and decided to make economies. It was decided to abolish for the next year 173 posts in the Queen's Household alone.

Marie Antoinette cut down her style of living; there were few feasts or balls. In any case she had no heart for dancing, for in the summer of 1787 she was in mourning. Little Princesse Sophie was dead.

In spite of the dismissal of 600 guards and light horse, these economies did not fill the gap and Loménie de Brienne was obliged to come before the Parliament. But the lawyers revolted and refused to register two edicts concerned with the imposition of a stamp duty and land tax. According to the magistrates only the States General could avert bankruptcy and they began to set in motion their customary procedure of "remonstrances," "protests" and "reiterated remonstrances." Urged on by Marie Antoinette, Loménie de Brienne had the two edicts registered at a *Lit de Justice* held at Versailles on 6 August, and the King exiled the Parliament to Troyes.

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

sions were held and Loménie de Brienne was burned in effigy. Paris was practising for the great combat. The capital was aware that since the death of Vergennes the Queen was taking an active part in the Government. If the police had not intervened they would have burned her in effigy too. The lieutenant of police advised the Queen not to show herself in Paris.

The situation was becoming worse, the coffers were empty and a compromise had to be made. The Parliamentarians grew tired of Champagne and agreed to vote a "twentieth part." But on 19 November the conflict started again. The King held another *Lit de Justice* in the great chamber of the Palais de Justice in order to register another edict permitting him to issue successive loans of 420 million.

In order to spare the magistrates' susceptibility Louis XVI had omitted to add "by my express command," which was the obligatory formula for *Lits de Justice*. On this occasion, therefore, Justice was only half asleep on the bed and it was not forbidden to express an opinion. The tumult grew louder. Through the noise new words were heard for the first time: "arbitrary power," "despotism." The uproar increased, and then suddenly died down. The former Duc de Chartres, who had been Duc d'Orléans for two years now, rose. The head of the younger branch stood up before Louis XVI for the first time. He was heard to say calmly: "If the King is holding a session of Parliament the votes should be collected and counted; if it is a *Lit de Justice* we should be silent." He then added: "This registration is illegal."

This remark does not seem very unpleasant to us, but in the 18th century it constituted an "insolence." While the future Philippe-Egalité was being applauded the King returned to Versailles.

Marie Antoinette had a great deal to do with the measures which were now to be taken and which ended in the virtual suppression of the Parliaments. It would appear that until the return of Necker hardly anything was done without her consent.

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

King is still weak and suspicious. He trusts only the Queen and it appears that it is she who does everything. The Ministers often go to see her and keep her informed of all business. It was often said by the public that the King was beginning to drink, that the Queen encouraged this passion and took advantage of his condition to make him sign anything she wanted. Nothing could be more untrue. He has no liking for drink and, granting the general supposition, it would be far too dangerous a vice by its consequences, since other people besides the Queen could extract a signature."

If anyone was well informed it was Axel Fersen. According to Saint-Priest, Fersen used to go "on horseback in the park, near the Trianon, three or four times a week; on her side the Queen did the same alone, and these meetings caused a great deal of public scandal, in spite of the favourite's modesty and restraint, for he was the most discreet of all the Queen's friends."

In spite of the ominous rumbling of the thunder the storm might have rolled away, but by an irremediable error the monarchy declared itself powerless: it called on the help of the Nation and set in motion the formidable machine which was to crush everything in its way.

In all France there was but one cry: "The States General and the return of Necker!" Louis XVI vacillated for six months; finally, he yielded and promised to summon the deputies of the States in the following year at Versailles. An inevitable consequence was that Loménie de Brienne was replaced by Necker. "I tremble—excuse this weakness," wrote Marie Antoinette to Mercy on the same day, "because it is I who have caused him to be recalled. My fate is to bring misfortune. And if as a result of devilish schemes he fails again or if he extends the King's authority I shall be even more detested." She was seeing clearly now, but it was too late.

Necker no doubt did what he could—he even lent the Treasury two millions of his own money—but he, too, trembled.

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

The "great wave" was the States General. The public was so occupied by the convening of the deputies that the deficit took second place. Thousands of pamphlets appeared. Public opinion was at fever-heat. On 1 January 1788 Paris learned that the Third Estate was to have as many deputies as the two others put together.

The Queen's political anxieties were coupled with a great personal grief: the ill-health of her elder son. The Dauphin, who had grown very thin, had a fever every evening. At that time the good effects of mountain air were unknown and, faced with the child's "state of weakness and languor," the doctors argued fiercely about the salubrity of the air of La Muette compared with that of Versailles.

In order to prevent the medical staff from coming to blows the little Dauphin was sent to the château of Meudon. When Louis XVI was a child he too had been sickly and the air at Meudon had done him good; one had only to look at him now. But the invalid's condition grew daily worse.

Marie Antoinette often went to see her son. "Everything the poor little child says is amazing; he breaks the Queen's heart. He shows the greatest affection for her. The other day he begged her to dine in his room. Alas! she swallowed more tears than bread."

The child left his bed on 4 May 1789 to lie on the balcony of the Little Stable at Versailles and watch the procession of the States General going from the church of Notre Dame to the church of Saint-Louis.

And what a procession! A procession in which walked the last Kings of France: Louis XVI, Louis XVIII, Charles X, Louis-Philippe, then Duc de Chartres, and the young Duc d'Angoulême who, one day at Rambouillet in 1830, was for three minutes to be the King least known to schoolboys of the future—King Louis XIX of France.

The Duc d'Orléans, who was to send Louis XVI to the scaffold, and whose son would at one blow dethrone Charles

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

Nobility. He was the hero of the day. And among all the deputies of the Third Estate there was even the future master of France, M. Maximilien de Robespierre.

The King, in full dress, surrounded by the high officers of the crown, was wildly applauded. But when Marie Antoinette appeared in her dress sprinkled with gold and silver there was silence, a contemptuous silence.

A few minutes later, in the church of Saint-Louis, the Bishop of Nancy, Mgr de la Fare, mounted into the pulpit and dared to say: "Sire, the people over whom you rule have given clear proofs of their patience. They are a martyred people, whose life seems to have been spared only that they may suffer the longer."

The deputies of the Third Estate, who up to this moment imagined that they merely represented over-harassed taxpayers, raised their heads. They would not lower them again.

It is painful to read the laconic entries in the King's private journal during the next few months. The three words, "Visit to Meudon," appear nearly every day like a *leitmotiv*. Between two audiences given to the deputies, between two hunts, the King hastened to join Marie Antoinette, who hardly left the dying boy's bedside.

On 2 June, at 10 o'clock in the evening, the great bell of Notre Dame sounded for the Forty Hours' Prayer. On the 3rd the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in all the churches in Paris. The King arrived at Meudon at four o'clock and left in his carriage at 10 o'clock in the evening. The Queen remained at her son's bedside. At one o'clock in the morning the child breathed his last. But, in accordance with etiquette, Marie Antoinette had not the right to weep by the little corpse, which was already surrounded by twelve candles. She had to return to Versailles. Slaves of ceremonial, the parents remained at Versailles. "Mass at eight o'clock," wrote the King. "Benediction. I saw no one. My son's funeral." They were allowed



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

It was at Marly, on 19 June, that the King received "his councils." It was a crucial moment. Two days earlier the deputies of the Third Estate, together with a few members of the Clergy, had set themselves up as a "national assembly." Without further delay they pronounced illegal any tax raised without their consent, and they invited the two other Orders to take counsel with them. On 18 June part of the Clergy joined them. The "advanced" nobles had not been able to win over the Nobility. The Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, and the Duc de Luxembourg, who was President of the Nobility, exhorted the King to resistance. His crown was in peril; he should dissolve the States General, who were exceeding their rights.

Necker arrived at Marly. Received first of all by Marie Antoinette, who called the deputies "a pack of madmen," the Genevan tried to advocate conciliation. The Privy Council began its meeting and the Minister outlined his plan, which was that the King should allow the three Orders to join together and should authorise modifications to the constitution of the kingdom, but on condition that two Chambers were formed.

After two hours of discussion Louis XVI began to be influenced by Necker's arguments. Suddenly the door opened and an officer came and spoke in a low voice to the King, who hurried out.

"The Queen has sent for him," murmured Necker. "We've got nowhere!" He was quite right. When Louis XVI came back into the council room he had changed his mind. Marie Antoinette had won her point. There must be no treating with the "rebels."

But on the next day, 20 June, while the King was hunting the stag at Le Butard, the "rebels," finding the Salle des Menus Plaisirs shut, assembled in the Jeu de Paume (tennis-court) and the famous Oath followed. As Mirabeau's secretary, Dumont, wrote later, the Third Estate was henceforth "in league against the power of the Throne."

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

Priest and Montmorin begged them not to "embitter the Third Estate, the mouthpiece of public opinion." But Marie Antoinette, backed up by Provence, Artois and three Ministers out of six, advocated the use of authority. Louis XVI, only a sawdust puppet who could be made to take up any position, agreed to play the authoritarian. The three Orders would deliberate separately; he had not summoned a national assembly but the States General, and these gentlemen should hold no meeting apart from the royal sessions.

Necker, who had made his opinions publicly known, did not attend the session. Surrounded by his wife and the Princes, Louis XVI played the part of a blind despot. The decrees on taxes of 17 June had no force; the manorial tithes and rights would be maintained. Before leaving the hall, followed by the triumphant Queen, Louis XVI commanded the three Orders to separate and take counsel in their respective rooms, but no one moved. Most historic remarks have been made up after the event. Mirabeau doubtless refused to leave his place and doubtless spoke of the bayonets which alone could make him rise, but very probably did not exactly utter his famous exclamation which has made the fortune of generations of print-sellers.

The King seemed to take no interest in the matter. During the days that followed Louis XVI wrote his famous "Nothing" each day in his Journal. On 25 June "Nothing" was accompanied by this sigh: "The stag was hunted at Saint-Appoline," the implication being: "and I was not there." He no longer galloped with the hunt, for he was trying to win the race for the revolution. Having forbidden the Three Orders to meet together, he now commanded them to.

The Nobles thereupon declared "that the monarchy must be protected from the King." On 27 June Paris was illuminated. Marie Antoinette could not understand this popular rejoicing. How could France be happy when the monarchy had been degraded by a pack of clodhoppers and lawyers? They must

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

bubble obeyed the least breath, hastened to resume his rôle of despot. He approved the idea of a *coup d'état*. But to dissolve the Assembly he needed troops. The regiments converged on Paris by forced marches.

What followed is well known: on 11 July Necker's dismissal was like the crack of a whip. It became known in the town on 12 July and Camille Desmoulins at the Palais Royal cried: "I have just come from Versailles. M. Necker is dismissed. This is the signal for a St. Bartholomew's Day of the patriots. This evening the Swiss and German battalions will cut our throats. We have but one resource—to take to arms."

And two days later, in "searching for arms," they were to take the Bastille.

That evening the King went to bed, after writing in his notebook: "14, nothing." And yet that afternoon a deputation had come from the Assembly to ask him to withdraw the troops encamped in the Champ de Mars, so as to calm Paris. He had agreed. He risked nothing, for Versailles and the suburbs of Paris were full of soldiers, and the bodyguards had been ready for two days. The deputation had also announced that the Parisians were marching on the Bastille. All right, it would defend itself. After all, M. de Launay had cannons and at the first shot the attackers would disappear. Tomorrow he would go to the Assembly and dissolve the States General.

The King fell peacefully asleep. He awoke with a start. The Grand Master of the Wardrobe, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, was at his bedside. "The Bastille has been taken! The governor has been assassinated! His head is being borne on a pike through the town."

They consulted together. Should they go to Metz, as Marie Antoinette advised? Maréchal de Broglie remarked sensibly: "It is easy to go to Metz, but what should we do when we get there?"

The King decided to abdicate. Just when nothing prevented him from carrying out his *coup d'état* for which he now had —

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

he went to the Assembly with his brothers and announced to the deputies the withdrawal of all troops. But although a weathercock he was none the less a worthy man and he uttered from his heart a sentence which provoked enthusiasm: "I am one with the Nation, I entrust myself to you."

There was wild applause. Hand in hand the deputies accompanied the King, who returned slowly on foot to the château. The crowd which had gathered followed them, crying: "Long live the King!"

The courtyards of the château were filled with an immense crowd who called for the King, the Queen and the new Dauphin to appear on the balcony. Marie Antoinette told Mme Campan to go and find the future Louis XVII and to ask Mme de Polignac not to accompany the little Prince.

Having carried out her orders, Mme Campan went down into the courtyard just as the King and Queen, with Mme Royale and the Dauphin, appeared on the balcony.

"Ah!" said one woman, disappointed, "the Duchesse is not with her."

"No," a man replied, "but she is still at Versailles. She is like a mole! She is working underground, but we shall be able to dig her out."

Terrified, Mme Campan reported this conversation to Marie Antoinette. The Queen had received many warnings of the same kind that morning and she summoned the Duchesse.

"I fear the worst. In the name of our friendship leave me. You still have time to avoid the fury of my enemies. When they attack you they are more incensed against me than against you."

Mme de Polignac yielded. Not without difficulty, for at Sens they were nearly recognised, M. and Mme de Polignac arrived at Basle. Soon they received a letter from Marie Antoinette: "I can only venture to write a word, my dear love . . . I cannot express all my regret at being separated from you; I hope you feel as I do. We are surrounded with nothing but grief, misfortune and unhappiness."

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

only too happy to think that all those I care for are far from me."

Fersen was at Valenciennes, where he saw passing through the Comte d'Artois, the Prince de Condé, the Duc de Bourbon, the Duc d'Enghien, Vaudreuil and the Marquis de Polignac. All the Queen's friends left Versailles: Coigny, Calonne, Lambesq, Luxembourg, the Marsans, the Rohans, the Castries, Breteuil, and even the Abbé de Vermond. They left her to face the storm alone.

"My sole resource is in my children," she wrote to Mme de Polignac. "I have them with me as much as possible. You have certainly heard of the appointment of Mme de Tourzel. It gave me great pain." Mme de Tourzel had been appointed Governess to the two Children of France.

During these months of August and September the Queen often went to her beloved Trianon. After dining in the little château Marie Antoinette would often rest on the bed of dry moss arranged in her little grotto behind the box-covered hill. Lulled by the sound of the little spring which rose out of the sand of the grotto, she would fall to musing.

She was musing thus on the afternoon of 5 October. For the last few days things seemed to have been going better. "I was delighted with my day on Thursday," she had told a deputation the evening before.

Thursday had been the banquet given by the officers of the Versailles garrison on 1 October to their comrades of the Flanders regiment, which had just arrived from Douai to protect the royal family. At first Marie Antoinette had not wished to attend the banquet given in the Opera Theatre, but one of her ladies, Mme de Tessé, came to ask her at least to have a look. The guests, numbering 206, ate at a horseshoe-shaped table on the stage. After the second service the Duc de Villeroi, Captain of the first company of guards, had invited all the grenadiers, cavaliers and Swiss Guards to the banquet.

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

family. As each health was drunk the trumpets sounded the charge. One of the guests, it appeared, had murmured "To the health of the Nation," but no one had paid any attention. On hearing this report Marie Antoinette hesitated, but at that moment the King came back from the hunt and the Queen bore him off with their two children to the railed-in box facing the stage. The guests had already done justice to the wines and the meal prepared by the chef Deharmes, and when the royal family appeared they were given a wildly enthusiastic reception. The applause and the welcoming cries still rang in the Queen's ears.

As was to be expected, however, the Paris pamphleteers—the Marats, Desmoulins and Loustalots—had transformed this happy evening into an orgy. They had written that the guests had drunkenly trampled on the tricolour cockade. The Queen thought the trouble would die down. In the words of a contemporary: "the moment there was a lull and an appearance of security she quickly resumed all her illusions." And now, on Monday 5 October, her illusions prevented her from realising that since Thursday's "orgy" Paris was in a ferment. There was no bread in Paris, whereas, according to the pamphleteers, flour was being hoarded at Versailles, where, to make matters worse, they were insulting the Nation. In the streets there were cries of: "It is time to cut the Queen's throat."

How far away all this seemed at Trianon! Through the narrow crack in the rock the Queen gazed at the ravine, where the trees were already changing colour. The sky was dark and the rain began to fall. Suddenly Marie Antoinette saw a page hurrying towards the grotto. In a moment he was before her, panting.

He was sent by M. de Saint-Priest. Paris was marching on Versailles.

## The Entry into History

IT WAS POURING with rain. The first horde of 6,000 women marched towards Versailles preceded by ten drummers, four cannon and Maillard, the conqueror of the Bastille. Covered with mud and soaked to the skin, they called to the onlookers: "See what a state we are in, but the jade will pay us dearly!"

At half-past three the van of the terrifying crowd reached Versailles. At the entrance of the Avenue de Paris some of the women were almost knocked down by a group of riders. It was the King, who having heard of the march from Paris was returning hurriedly from the hunt. When he arrived at the château the tocsin sounded and the gates, which had not moved on their hinges since the time of the Roi Soleil, were closed. The bodyguards, the Flanders regiment and 200 men of the Versailles National Guard were drawn up in battle array in the Place d'Armes. Not a single cartridge had been distributed.

Behind the hedge of troops the château was seething. The King was in council with the Queen. What was to be done? Saint-Priest explained his plan. "I described the danger of awaiting this multitude at Versailles and I suggested measures to be taken in this event. They consisted in having the bridges over the Seine guarded by a battalion of the Flanders regiment at Sèvres, by another at Saint Cloud, and by the Swiss Guards at Neuilly, and finally in the King's sending the Queen and the royal family to Rambouillet, where the Chasseurs of the Lorraine regiment were stationed, while His Majesty went to meet the Parisians with 200 Chasseurs des Evêchés and his 800 bodyguards. Once the thousand horse were drawn up on the other side of the Pont de Sèvres the King would order the crowd from Paris to retire and if they did not do so, he would order the

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

ceed, the King would have time to regain Versailles at the head of his troops and then to march to Rambouillet."

Louis XVI was tempted, but Marie Antoinette did not want to be separated from her husband. "I do not wish the King to incur a danger which I cannot share."

While hours went by in waiting and inaction at the château the fishwives, covered with mud from head to foot, infiltrated into Versailles.

Maillard, at the head of a group, invaded the Assembly. "The people have no bread," he cried. "They are in despair, their arms are raised and they will certainly be led into some excesses. We ask permission to search the houses suspected of holding flour. It is for the Assembly to avert the shedding of blood, but the Assembly contains enemies of the people, who are the cause of the famine. Wicked men are giving money and bonds to the millers to ensure that they do not grind."

"The names? The names? Name them!" was cried on all sides.

In all seriousness Maillard replied: "The Archbishop of Paris has given 200 livres to a miller to stop him grinding!"

Those on the right were angry, but Robespierre, in one of his first interventions, approved this absurdity. Disorder crept in, grew and became indescribable. The women howled: "Bread, bread, bread!"

One harridan, with a "sharpened dagger" in her hand, went up to Maître Thomas de Frondeville, *Président à mortier* of the Normandy Parliament, and asked him in a low voice: "Is the Queen's apartment as well guarded as they say? Isn't there some way of getting in?"

Other women came up against the troops who were still arrayed in the Place d'Armes. Some of them "offered to pull up their skirts in front of the cavalry." The same theme recurred incessantly: "Ah! The bitch! If I could get hold of her I would tear her apart!"

A thick mist fell on the town. Behind the cavalry gleaming with rain a few windows in the château lit up. One of Lafavette's



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

of the Paris National Guards was marching on Versailles with 30,000 men, including the former French Guards.

Saint-Priest immediately recommended a general removal to Rambouillet and even Normandy. The King would not decide before taking Marie Antoinette's advice. She agreed, since there was no longer any question of leaving her husband, and hurried into the children's apartments, where she informed the sub-governesses: "We are leaving in a quarter-of-an-hour, get your things together and hurry!"

But it was too late. What had been possible at four o'clock was no longer possible at eight. The crowd prevented the carriage from leaving the Stables. Force would have been needed and the King refused to employ it. Marie Antoinette sighed: "Go and tell those ladies that everything is changed. We are staying."

There was consternation in the whole court, but Marie Antoinette reassured those about her. During this night of 5 to 6 October she remained astonishingly calm. She entered into history. "Her countenance was noble and dignified," reports an observer, "and her face was calm, and although she could have had no illusions as to what there was to fear, no one could perceive the least trace of anxiety. She reassured everyone, thought of everything and was far more preoccupied by all that was dear to her than with her own person."

A few gentlemen and a handful of officers surrounded her. Among them was Fersen. They begged for an order authorising them to take horses from the stable, so they might defend the royal family if it were attacked. "I shall consent to give the order on one condition," replied Marie Antoinette. "If the King's life is in danger you will use it promptly; if I alone am in danger you will not use it."

Meanwhile, Louis XVI, at the urging of the deputy Mounier, gave, weeping, his "pure and simple" consent to the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Still weeping he ordered the body-

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

fenders he could not let them become victims. Only the Versailles National Guard remained on parade.

The army of Parisians arrived half-an-hour after midnight. Lafayette left his men in the Place d'Armes and entered the château. The General always seemed to be taking part in a scene intended for coloured reproduction. With a telling gesture of his arm he exclaimed: "Sire, I bring you my head to save that of Your Majesty. If my blood must flow, let it be in the service of my King rather than in the shameful light of the torches of the Place de la Grève."

"Monsieur de Lafayette," replied Louis XVI, "you must never doubt that I always have pleasure in seeing you and your good Parisians. Go and let them know my feelings."

In words that have not come down to us, Lafayette then asked the King to let the former French Guards take over the posts they had deserted a month before and to be entrusted with guarding the château. Louis XVI—in his second abdication of the evening—accepted.

It was then two o'clock in the morning. Marie Antoinette dismissed her servants, refused the protection of several gentlemen who wished to spend the night outside her door, and went to bed. The sound of drums mounted from the courtyard. It was the Versailles National Guard handing over the passwords to the French Guards.

The Queen slept. Lafayette retired to the Hôtel de Noailles, a short distance from the chapel gate, went to bed and sank into slumber. "I had no anxiety," this heroic donkey was to say later. "The people had promised me they would remain calm."

Tuesday, 6 October, dawned. It was six o'clock. At that moment Marie Antoinette heard a noise under her windows. She rang. Her waiting-woman informed her that it was "the women of Paris who, not having found anywhere to sleep, were walking on the terrace." Relieved, Marie Antoinette dozed off. A quarter of an hour later she was suddenly awakened. Two of her women, Marie Thérèse and

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

The château was invaded, and some of the guards had been massacred. Not far off Marie Antoinette heard the immense clamour of the people looking for the entrance to her apartments. They caught phrases: "This way! This way! . . . Kill! Kill! . . . No quarter! . . . Death . . . We must have the Queen's heart! ! ! .

Aided by her two women, Marie Antoinette put on her stockings and a petticoat and fled by the little corridor behind her bed. But the door leading to the *Œil-de-Bœuf* was closed. Behind her Marie Antoinette heard the rioters enter her bedroom. With all the shouts filling the palace it was several minutes before a boy heard the fugitives. Weeping, the Queen ran across the room to get to the King's apartments. They heard her beg: "My friends, my dear friends, save me!"

She took breath again in the old dining room, but the King was not there. A minute before he had left by the secret passage to help the Queen. Learning from a guard that she was in safety, he went to find the Dauphin, while Marie Antoinette hurried to little Madame Royale. Finally, five minutes later, they were all four reunited in Louis XVI's bedroom. They could hear the attackers' axes on the very door of the *Œil-de-Bœuf*. The panels flew in pieces. Suddenly the noise was stilled. What was happening? The French Guards charged and cleared the château.

But the Cour de Marbre and the Cour Royale were black with people. "A crowd of almost naked women," reports an observer, "and men armed with pikes threatened the windows with terrifying cries." Marie Antoinette looked out. "There she is, the trollop!" yelled a tall, red-headed woman, showing a sickle held by one of her companions. "This will take her head off!"

Other shouts now came from the courtyard: "Let the King come to the balcony!"

Lafayette, who had finally been got out of bed, retained his

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

Lafayette incessantly begged the crowd to retire. Not a man moved.

Suddenly a voice demanded: "The Queen on the balcony!"

All went pale and begged Marie Antoinette not to expose herself. Maria Theresa's daughter looked at the surging crowd brandishing its arms. "I shall appear."

She came forward, alone on the balcony. Thousands of eyes gazed at this woman, with her hair disordered, who crossed her hands on her yellow and white striped wrapper.

"Shoot! Shoot!"

Marie Antoinette bowed her head and curtsied.

At this gallantry a great shout of "Long live the Queen!" rang from end to end of the great parade ground.

The Queen re-entered her bedroom, covering her children with tears and kisses. But the cries of "To Paris! To Paris!" grew louder, swelled and became so menacing that there was no drawing back. For the tenth time Louis XVI returned to the balcony with Lafayette. Not without difficulty they obtained a moment of silence.

"My friends," cried the King in a loud voice, "I shall go to Paris with my wife and children. I entrust what is most precious to me to the love of my good and faithful subjects."

There was a thunder of applause, punctuated with shots and even cannon-fire.

"Madame," Lafayette asked Marie Antoinette, "what are the Queen's personal intentions?"

"I know the fate that awaits me, but my duty is to die at the King's feet and in the arms of my children."

"All right, Madame. Come with me."

He led her on to the balcony. But there were such howls that at first Lafayette could not make himself heard. He kissed the Queen's hand. There was applause, and shouts of "Long live the General, long live the Queen!"

Lafayette then made this extraordinary speech: "The Queen has been deceived. She promises that she will be so no longer."

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

She promises to love her people, to be attached to them, like Jesus Christ to his church!"

Through her tears—tears of shame—she looked at the crowd which was now applauding her loudly.

At twenty-five past one the procession of the fallen monarchy left Versailles for ever, on their first stage towards the scaffold. Behind the royal coach marched the disarmed guards, then 2,000 court carriages. In one of them was Fersen.

The journey lasted seven hours. At the Chaillot barrier Bailly, the Mayor of Paris, made so bold as to say to the King: "What a wonderful day, Sire, on which the Parisians hold Your Majesty and his family in their city."

But the "wonderful day" was not yet over. In the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville a dense crowd greeted the sovereigns. These were no riff-raff or fishwives but honest folk who were glad to cry: "Long live the King, long live the Queen, long live the Dauphin, long live us all!" Everyone wept with joy and embraced. The Revolution was over!

It was nearly ten o'clock when the royal family finally arrived at the Tuileries, which had been abandoned by the monarchy since Louis XV's minority. In the morning a good-humoured crowd surrounded the castle, continually acclaiming the King, the Dauphin and even the Queen.

"If we forget where we are and how we came here," Marie Antoinette wrote to Mercy, who had been advised not to show himself too much, "we should be pleased with the people's mood, particularly this morning. I hope that if there is no lack of bread a great many things will settle down. I speak to the people. The militia, the fishwives—all give me their hand and I give them mine. . . . No one would believe all that has happened in the last 24 hours and yet whatever one imagined would be less than what we have had to endure."

"All hate must cease," she had said that morning to the fishwives. But with her, in spite of her good intentions, hate did

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

not leave her heart. It would be impossible for Maria Theresa's daughter to forget the terrible awakening of 6 October and the insults thrown in her face. Although she was to claim to have "known everything, seen everything, forgotten everything," there would always be present to her memory those two heads stuck on two pikes, the shameful trophies dripping with blood which had preceded her carriage. She would always hear the cries of the dregs of humanity who had come to tear her from her palace. Lafayette was to observe very justly: "She has all that is needed to win the hearts of the Parisians, but an ingrained arrogance and a temper which she is not able sufficiently to conceal more often alienates them. I wish she would bring more good will to it."

Even if Marie Antoinette wished it, and perhaps she did, she would never succeed. It is enough to spend a few hours in the "Inferno" of the Bibliothèque Nationale, where they keep the nauseating pamphlets illustrated with licentious engravings which were written to attack Marie Antoinette from 1788 to 1793, to be no longer able to reproach her with her attitude. The Queen was probably aware of only a small part of this heap of filth and obscenity, but what had come to her eyes wounded her as much as the people's cries for her death.

Her children—*Mousseline* and *Chou d'amour*, as she called them—were now her only joy. "We lodge all three in the same apartment," she wrote to Mme de Polignac. "They are nearly always with me and are my consolation. If I could be happy I should be so by reason of these two little creatures. *Chou d'amour* is charming and I love him madly. He loves me very much, too, in his way. . . . He is well, grows strong and no longer becomes angry. He goes for a walk every day, which does him much good."

Axel also brought her consolation. During the whole of the spring of 1790 he was to see Marie Antoinette "freely in her own house" and he sighed, touched: "Poor woman, she is like

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

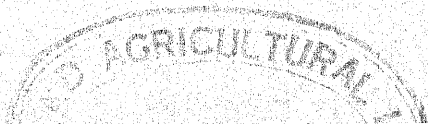
been able to love like that." A few days later he wrote: "She is extremely unhappy, but very brave. I try to console her as best I can. I owe her that; she has been so perfect to me!"

It seems that without his dear presence Marie Antoinette would not have been able to bear her burdens. There was nothing to be got from the King. Admittedly, when Louis XVI spoke to her "he revealed in his eyes and behaviour a devotion rarely inspired by the most beloved mistress"; admittedly he constantly consulted her and asked her advice, but the poor man, victim of his perpetual hesitations, was no help or support. He had been completely overtaken by events and by the total disruption of his life.

During this twilight of the monarchy Marie Antoinette refused to take part in any business at all. Gradually, urged by Mercy, she agreed to alter her decision.

It was of Mirabeau that Mercy was thinking. He was the only man who could restrain the Revolution. "When one undertakes to direct a Revolution," said Mirabeau on 10 October 1789, "the difficulty is not to spur it on but to restrain it."

Six months later this observation had never been more accurate. Mirabeau, who on concluding his agreement tried to give back to Louis XVI a few scraps of the power the King's clumsy hands had let slip, came up against the triumvirate of the left: Barnave, Lameth and Duport. He was only partly successful. He might perhaps have succeeded better if he had been willing to join with Lafayette, but the two men hated each other.



## Varennnes . . . or the Hand of Fate!

WITH A HEARTBROKEN sigh Louis XVI had brought himself to sign the decree concerning the civil constitution of the clergy. "I would rather be King of Metz," he had said to Fersen, "than remain King of France in such conditions."

When on 10 March 1791, after several months' delay, the Pope finally condemned the civil constitution of the clergy voted by the Assembly, the Queen realised that there remained only one solution for the King—flight. They could reach Montmédy, the headquarters of the General Marquis de Bouillé. There Louis XVI could assemble troops "and those of his subjects who were still faithful to him, and could try to win back the rest of his people led astray by seditious leaders." If order could not be re-established, the King would rely on "the help of his allies," that is, on Austria. For six months Marie Antoinette's one idea had been flight. Mirabeau himself was of the same opinion.

"But what are these people thinking of?" he exclaimed. "Can not they see the abyss opening before their feet?" At the end of March Mirabeau took to his bed to die. "In my heart I wear mourning for the monarchy, whose remnants will become the prey of the factious," he sighed. On 2 April he was dead.

To convince her husband of the necessity for leaving was a difficult task for Marie Antoinette. Axel Fersen had undertaken to arrange the departure. At the Queen's request he had ordered, at the end of December, a far too luxurious berlin painted outside in green and yellow and upholstered in white Utrecht velvet.

During the two months before the great adventure Axel overflowed with activity to save the woman he loved. Nearly every



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

day he entered the Tuileries by an unguarded door, kept Marie Antoinette informed on his steps to obtain a false passport in the name of Mme de Korff and brought her Bouillé's ciphered dispatches.

Gradually the plan became organised. The royal family would leave with Mme Elisabeth, Mme de Tourzel and three bodyguards disguised as couriers. They would also take two waiting-women, who would travel in a cabriolet. With the six occupants of the berlin this would bring the number to eleven. At each stage they would have to order six draught-horses for the berlin, three horses for the cabriolet and two post-horses for the couriers.

Bouillé came himself to Paris and had long discussions with Fersen. "The most difficult point seems to me to be getting out of the Tuileries where all the exits are guarded." Axel promised Bouillé to "be responsible for this delicate operation." On the evening of the flight it would be impossible to park the berlin near the château, for it would attract the passers-by. Fersen therefore bought a *citadine*—a kind of omnibus—which would take the fugitives to the barrier. He himself, disguised as a hired coachman, would take the reins.

It was decided that the travellers would then be left to themselves until Châlons. After Pont-de-Somme-Vesle, the first post after Châlons, the fugitives would find detachments of cavalry at each post who would escort them to Montmédy by way of Sainte-Menehould, Clermont, Varennes, Dun and Stenay.

Axel agreed to Bouillé's scheme only very reluctantly. He concurred with the General on the precautions to be taken from Paris to Châlons, for, as he wrote, "the best precaution is to take none at all; all must depend on speed and secrecy." But after that? "If you are not very sure of your detachments," the Swede continued wisely, "it would be better not to station any until after Varennes." If only they had listened to him!

The departure was fixed for the evening of Monday, 20 June.

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

It was a quarter-to-eleven. Following Fersen's carefully arranged plan it had been decided that the Children of France would leave the château first. The Queen, followed by Madame Royale and Mme de Tourzel carrying the Dauphin, left her apartments, entered the corridor which ran the whole length of the palace and went towards the apartments of M. de Villequier, First Gentleman of the Bedchamber, who had emigrated. Marie Antoinette opened the door with the key she had provided herself with and the little group crossed to an antechamber which led on to the Cour des Princes by an unguarded glass door. The Queen first of all looked into the courtyard. A silhouette could be seen behind the window lit by the carriage lamps and the torches in the courtyard. It was Fersen dressed in his coachman's greatcoat.

Axel entered and took the Dauphin's hand. Madame de Tourzel took the hand of Madame Royale and followed, most rashly, by the Queen, the little group went down the steps leading to the courtyard noisy with National Guards, coachmen and servants.

Following the shadows of the carriages of courtiers who had come for the King's *coucher*, the fugitives reached the *citadine*. Mme de Tourzel and the children got in. Fersen climbed on the driver's seat, cracked his whip at the hired nags and quietly drove out of the courtyard. The Queen, whose emotion and anguish may be imagined, watched the departure of the ramshackle vehicle, which after making a detour by the quays and the Place Louis XV, would wait in the Rue de l'Echelle. By a miracle Marie Antoinette returned unnoticed to the drawing room. The Comte de Provence was saying goodbye. "We embraced tenderly and separated," he related.

While the King, still slave to a persistent etiquette, had now to play his usual part in the ceremony of the *coucher*, Marie Antoinette went to her bedroom and calmly gave her orders for her walk the next day. One can imagine how her heart beat as she thought of her children, from whom she had never been

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

separated, wandering about in a cab at the mercy of suspicious patrols in that dreadful Paris. If Axel had not been with them she would never have agreed to such a dangerous plan. Her women undressed her, while the servants fastened the bolts and the inside shutters. Marie Antoinette went to bed and was left alone.

It was a quarter-past eleven.

A few minutes later Mme Thiébaud, who was in the secret, came to help her mistress put on a grey dress and black mantle and a large hat with a veil falling from it. Marie Antoinette slipped the bolt and opened the door giving on to the long corridor. She drew back, terrified.

There was a sentry pacing up and down. After ten minutes of hesitation and suspense she took advantage of a moment when the man's back was turned, leaped across the passage, reached the staircase and was soon in M. de Villequier's apartment. One of the bodyguards, M. de Malden, was there, disguised as a courier. Marie Antoinette took his arm and they went down into the courtyard, calmly crossing the guardroom, where the National Guards were chatting. As they walked to the Place du Petit-Carrousel Malden soothed the Queen. Everything had gone well. Madame Elisabeth had reached the meeting place first, but they had had to wait for the King. His *coucher*, at which Lafayette had been present, had been longer than usual. But now Malden had lost his way in the maze of little streets between the Place du Petit-Carrousel and the Louvre and could not find the Rue de l'Echelle. It was midnight before they finally found the *citadine* with Axel pacing up and down before it.

Everyone embraced the latecomer. Fersen whipped up his two horses and they drove off towards the barrier, doubtless by the boulevards and the Porte Saint Martin.

It was 1.30 in the morning when they finally came in sight of the round customs house. Another half-hour was lost in looking for the berlin, which was stowed away on the lower side of the

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

Metz road. Fersen's coachman and the second guard, M. de Moustier, had hidden it too well. The *citadine* drew up alongside the berlin so that the royal family passed from one carriage to the other without setting foot on the ground. Fersen turned the *citadine* over in the ditch, entangled the two horses in their harness and mounted the box.

It must have been nearly two o'clock. It was the shortest night of the year and day would begin to break in an hour. They galloped along and in less than half-an-hour the berlin reached Bondy. The six draught-horses ordered by the third guard, M. de Valory, were waiting in their harness before the posthouse. While the grooms unharnessed the horses belonging to Fersen, Axel got down from the box. The King had been opposed to the idea of the officer's going any further. Perhaps he did not think it proper to travel under the protection of a man whom everyone thought to be his wife's lover.

Her eyes filled with tears, Marie Antoinette saw the Swede open the door and bow to her. "Goodbye, Madame de Korff!"

Specialists say that at the centre of a typhoon, or at the heart of a whirlwind, is a zone where not a breath of wind disturbs the surface of the sea. During the twenty hours' journey separating Bondy and Varennes the royal family will always seem to be in this "dead calm," while all about them the storm rose and burst forth.

In Paris the astonishing news spread from the royal apartments, reached the attics and descended to the kitchens and like a trail of powder ran all through Paris: "The King has left! The Queen has escaped!"

As he buckled on his belt in his room that morning Lafayette could hear an approaching "murmur like the roar of a wave driven by the storm." By the time he reached the château a "stormy sea" greeted him. All Paris, "intoxicated at being for the first time without a master," was filling the streets. Of his

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

own authority Lafayette sent out volunteer couriers, mostly National Guards, in all directions, with orders to "run down" Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.

The royal berlin rolled peacefully towards Varennes. At half past ten that night the carriage stopped at the first houses of the "upper town." The road was deserted and not a hussar was to be seen. The relay horses they had expected to see at the entrance to the town were not there. Marie Antoinette got out and took a few steps with the King.

While one of the bodyguards went into the town in search of the horses they got back into the carriage and waited. None of the occupants of the carriage seems to have noticed the two horsemen, who passed the fugitives and descended into the "lower town." A little farther on, outside the Bras d'Or inn, they dismounted. Ten minutes later the trap was ready. A cart full of furniture barred the little bridge over the Aire. The *Procureur* of the district, the grocer Sauce, was awakened and with several National Guards took up his position at the end of a vaulted passage, a real death-trap which could even be closed by a carriage-gate. Standing against the walls, they waited for the berlin, which could take no other road.

For thirty minutes the berlin waited by the first houses of the "upper town." They could not stay there for ever. The bodyguard had found nothing. Perhaps Bouillé had got the horses ready on the other side of the river. The Clermont postillions agreed to drive that far. Everything seemed so calm that there was no anxiety in the heart of the fugitives. The heavy coach, with its brakes on for the hill, proceeded towards the vaulted passage which spanned the road.

Suddenly there were cries: "Stop! Stop!"

On the previous evening, at the same time, Marie Antoinette had been pretending to go to bed in her bedroom at the Tuileries.

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

The escapade had lasted exactly 24 hours. The Queen and her family were once more prisoners of the Revolution.

The tocsin rang urgently. All Varennes had been awakened and was now in front of the grocery run by the Procureur of the district, a plain wooden house to which the royal family had been conducted.

Marie Antoinette had only one hope: the arrival of General Bouillé. Meanwhile the National Guard from five leagues around marched on the little town. Varennes soon took on the appearance of a vast pleasure-garden or an enormous fair. Everywhere bread was being baked and bacon cooked and wine flowed like water. The crowd pressed so closely against the house that they finally entered. The most daring managed to climb to the first floor and gaze boldly at the "Austrian."

The hours passed, filled with anguish. Seated on cane chairs, the prisoners waited for their rescue.

Suddenly, at five in the morning, the door of the little room opened. It was Romeuf, Lafayette's aide-de-camp. Weeping, he handed the King the Assembly's decree. Louis XVI read aloud: "Order to all functionaries to arrest all the members of the royal family. . . ."

He looked at the Queen and said dully: "There is no longer a King in France."

Ten thousand people had flocked in Varennes and howled under the windows: "To Paris! To Paris!" They, too, were thinking of Bouillé. The cries grew louder. "We will drag them by the feet into their carriage! To Paris! To Paris!"

Finally Louis XVI left the little room and gave orders to harness the carriage. The tocsin was still ringing; the steeple of Varennes seemed to be sounding the knell of the monarchy.

"At about half-past seven," wrote an under-officer of dragoons, who was stationed at the entrance to the town, "I saw the royal carriage coming surrounded by a troop of armed men. It passed close to me and moved so slowly that I could see the

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

Queen returning my salute. The King made a gesture which revealed his deep grief and prostration. The Queen appeared even more distressed. . . . I have never in my life experienced such a sensation and this poignant scene was never effaced from my mind."

A quarter-of-an-hour later General de Bouillé arrived at the little town at the head of the Royal German regiment. From the farther side of the river, which was too deep to be forded, he could still see the berlin driving away with its guard of 4,000 men. By a refinement of misfortune he was unaware that a little farther on the road crossed to the right bank of the Aire. The regiment would only have had to gallop for a few minutes in order to overthrow the escort and rescue the King. From the hamlet of Ratantout Bouillé ordered the retreat to be sounded.

The berlin, which seemed to be borne along by the large crowd, rolled slowly back along the road to Paris. At half-past eleven, when they had been travelling for 16 hours, Marie Antoinette saw at the entrance to Châlons the silhouette against the sky of the triumphal arch erected in her honour when she arrived in France. Now, on 22 June 1791, Marie Antoinette was surrounded by four or five thousand men, dishevelled, yelling, drunk and brandishing the bloody remains of Comte de Dampierre, who had just been massacred for having dared to salute the Queen. Marie Antoinette, "in a state of prostration hardly to be conceived," watched the appalling spectacle. The procession stopped before the former "Intendancy" of Châlons, where the Dauphine had spent the night 21 years before.

It was two o'clock in the morning when the unfortunate people, who had not been to bed since they left the Tuileries, finally retired. But a wild hope kept them awake. Mme de Tourzel informs us that certain of the town's authorities showed the King a secret passage leading from the room where the Dauphin was sleeping and suggested that he should flee and ride to join Bouillé's army. But he would have had to leave the royal family, and Louis XVI refused.

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

At dawn Marie Antoinette fell asleep. It was the dawn of 23 June, a terrible day for Fersen, who on his arrival at Arlon learnt of the catastrophe from Bouillé himself. "All is lost," he wrote, "and I am in despair. Imagine my grief and pity me."

On Thursday, 23 June, the King and Queen were awakened at nine o'clock by an immense outcry. It was the "good Rémois" entering Châlons. As a serenade they shouted under Marie Antoinette's windows: "We will eat her heart and liver!"

The dregs of Rheims now took charge of the procession. There are no words to describe that appalling day.

A little before five that afternoon the mob were at a halt before the farm of Chêne-Fendu on the bank of the Marne, when a great shout arose. The carriage of three deputies of the Assembly, come to meet the prisoners, was in sight and soon stopped at the head of the procession. Preceded by an usher, the two "advanced" deputies, Pétion and Barnave, together with their colleague of the right, Latour-Maubourg, advanced towards the berlin.

Barnave, who had so often attacked the Queen in the Assembly and who had in the Tribune denounced Mirabeau's "treachery," was surprised by the royal family's "air of simplicity." He was moved by the tear-filled eyes of this woman, still young and pretty, who spoke to him with trust and friendship. Barnave would be one of Marie Antoinette's last conquests. He would listen to her, be won over and would soon be scandalised by the cries of the populace, who insulted the King and Marie Antoinette at each town they passed.

The next day saw the last stage. It took 13 hours from Meaux to Paris. To calm the crowd that besieged the berlin Marie Antoinette lifted up the little Dauphin, who was crying. A voice lashed out: "It's no good her showing us her son, we know very well it's not fat Louis's."

The King heard the insult, turned pale, but said nothing. Tears rolled down from the Queen's eyes. The Dauphin uttered "cries of terror."

The berlin moved forward again laden with



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

*tricoteuses*. They were everywhere, on the seats, on the shaft, on the mudguards and even on the box. It was a "hideous and sinister spectacle."

They skirted Paris by the boulevards. Apart from the sound of drums beating in funereal time there was a crushing, insulting silence. The National Guard lined the road with their muskets reversed, as for a funeral. Still hung with groups of "patriots," the berlin reached the Etoile barrier and went down the Champs-Élysées.

The King entered the Tuileries and Lafayette came forward. "Sire, Your Majesty knows my attachment to you, but I did not leave you unaware that if you separated your cause from that of the people I would remain on the side of the people."

"It is true," admitted the King. "You have followed your principles. It is a party affair. Now, here I am. I shall tell you frankly I thought I was surrounded by a crowd of people of your opinion whom you had put around me, but that that was not the opinion of France. During this journey I have come to see that I was mistaken and that it is the general opinion."

Lafayette was modest in his triumph. "Has Your Majesty any orders to give me?" he asked, bowing.

The King gave a loud laugh. "It seems to me I am more at your orders than you are at mine!"

The Queen did not conceal her "irritation" and went to her rooms. She took off her hat. Her hair, ash-blond five days before, was now quite white "like that of a woman of seventy."

The King and Queen were prisoners. How was this drifting kingdom to be governed? Louis XVI was less capable than ever of "acting like a King." He took advantage of his enforced leisure to indulge in the pleasures of statistics. "From 1775 to 1791," he wrote in his private Journal, "I went out 2,636 times."

Marie Antoinette had probably never been so much aware of the unfortunate man's incapacity as at that time. After the

# ANDRÉ CASTELOT

her entry into the capital and after the dull despair which had seized her when her dream crumbled, she suddenly took hold of herself. She cast about for the best thing to do. There was no King left in France. She took a decision which was to have unlimited consequences: she decided to replace the sovereign who was no more than a royal ghost. But where could she find support? There was no hope on the right; 256 deputies declared that since the King was a prisoner they would take no further part in the work of the Assembly. This "emigration to the interior," as it were, left the Constitutionals, such as Barnave, facing the Jacobins. Through the intermediary of the husband of one of her waiting-women, General de Jarjayes, Marie Antoinette got in touch with Barnave at the beginning of July.

Barnave read the note several times "with delight." He promised to save the Queen with the help of his friends. But Lameth and Duport were more reticent. In their eyes Marie Antoinette was "very frivolous" and incapable "of any continuity of thought." However, events were to force them to give her "her chance." The Republicans—a party born as a result of the catastrophe of Varennes—wanted to depose Louis XVI. The Triumvirs knew that once the King was suppressed the whole edifice built by the Constituent Assembly would crumble.

"Once the Nation is free," Barnave declared in the Tribune, "and once all French are equal, to wish for more is to wish the beginning of a cessation of freedom and to become guilty." There was applause and Robespierre was not even able to get a hearing.

Thanks to Barnave's speech the King was "maintained," but he was "suspended" until he should be presented with the new constitution on which the Assembly was working. Moved by the good intentions displayed by Marie Antoinette and with his friend's authorisation, Barnave took up his rôle of teacher. Everything must be altered. "The King has for long been deceived. He has allowed himself to be led into a succession of steps the last of which threatens to lose him his crown." But all could not be said at the time.

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

stand" on what they had seen during their journey. Was not the "general wish" of the country for the new constitution then being discussed article by article? The Queen must let her "present intentions" be publicly known. This could be done by working on her brother Leopold, who was now the Emperor of Austria, and on the Emigrés, who were stirred up and spoke of invading France and rescuing the prisoners of the Tuileries. It was for Marie Antoinette to make them understand that in all loyalty the King and Queen wished to become constitutional monarchs. Provence—who had crossed the frontier without incident—and Artois must return to the kingdom and the Emperor of Austria must recognise the future constitution. Barnave declared that Marie Antoinette "can neither adopt other ideas nor leave this path without being ruined."

The young deputy saw clearly. Either Louis XVI accepted the constitution without reservations and asked his brother-in-law Leopold not to meddle in his affairs, or he abdicated. By refusing to adopt one or other of these two positions the King and Queen hastened to their doom.

On Sunday, 17 July, a serious occurrence showed the path the King and Queen would have to take. The extreme left had summoned their supporters to the altar in the Champ de Mars to sign a Republican petition. The affair began as a farce: two citizens had hidden themselves under the altar and spied on the concealed charms of the petitioning ladies. The two *voyeurs* were taken for spies and with sudden brutality the tragedy began. They were massacred and their heads carried through the city. Bailly, Lafayette and Charles de Lameth, who was the brother of Alexandre and, so to speak, the fourth Triumvir, decided to re-establish order. The troops invaded the Champ de Mars, but by an irreparable stroke, the guards fired as a result of an incident which remains obscure, and fifty corpses were left on the ground.

The "massacre of the Champ de Mars" dug a trench of blood between the constitutional and the advanced democracies

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

into hiding. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette ought now to have had no hesitation in going forward blindly with the moderates.

Barnave's speeches at the Tribune were of prime importance for the monarchy and Marie Antoinette seems to have understood this. But unfortunately, only the Triumvirs were sincere. Marie Antoinette was lying to them. She had entered into the correspondence merely in order to "temporise."

Finally, thanks to Barnave and his friends, the constitution was voted. It gave the King powers which were undoubtedly limited but which were infinitely more extensive than the practically non-existent powers which the extreme left wished to grant him. Louis XVI could exercise his "veto" if he did not like a law. He would continue to nominate the Ministers, the Ambassadors and the military chiefs. He no longer had the right to make war, but the future legislative assembly could start a conflict only if the King asked it of them. Elsewhere it was laid down that only those could vote who had a landed revenue of 200 francs in the towns and 75 francs in the country. It was the triumph of the bourgeoisie.

But what was considered by the advanced deputies as "a step backwards" and resulted in Barnave's being described by Robespierre and Pétion as "an infamous cheat sold to the Austrian party," what seems to us today extremely moderate, appeared to Marie Antoinette, as she wrote to Mercy on 7 August, "a tissue of insolence and impractical absurdities." "Our only resource now is in the foreign powers. At all costs they must come to our aid."

Like most rulers of the time, Marie Antoinette had no feeling of "patriotism." In their eyes all sovereigns formed one large family and it was not betraying the nation to want to correct it when it was unfaithful. After all, a family council was summoned when a child needed to be set on the right path.

Marie Antoinette was more excusable in calling on the help of foreigners than in deceiving loyal, honest, and sincere people who because they had believed in her and had tried to save her would one day regret it.

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

The comedy went on. In order to give his consent Louis XVI had to make a speech to the Assembly, which was soon to disperse. "We will answer for everything," Barnave wrote, "if the King's speech is as it should be," and Marie Antoinette hastily asked her "friends" to revise the text carefully.

The deputies dispersed to their provinces. Barnave was triumphant. "The King is re-established, and the most difficult, the most critical and, we may even say, the most painful times are over." Marie Antoinette agreed and received the Triumvirs in the Tuileries, but she wrote to Axel: "You would never believe how much it costs me to do all I have to at present!"

Every day, with the help of invisible ink and lemon juice, she wrote letters, sometimes 30 pages long, which were sent to Brussels hidden in hats or biscuit boxes. "I am exhausted with writing," she sighed. "I have never worked so hard!"

To start off with, the new Legislative Assembly, a somewhat mediocre gathering, voted two decrees, one demanding the famous civic oath for priests, in default of which they would be imprisoned, and the other condemning the Emigrés to death if they did not return to France within two months.

Encouraged by Marie Antoinette, the King refused to approve the two decrees. "I do what everyone desires often enough for them to do what I want for once," he declared. And he persisted in his veto. This unaccustomed obstinacy amazed everyone. The "poor man's" obduracy is in keeping with Louis XVI's character, however. When a weak man is given the means to be strong he becomes wilful. For the King this right of veto granted by the Assembly was the plank to which he clung.

While, in spite of his veto, Louis XVI honestly imagined he could become King of the Revolution, Marie Antoinette had only one hope—Austria. And yet Leopold repeated: "There can be no question of expending our gold and our blood in order to re-establish France in its former powerful state."

Fersen knew that the interests of the Emigrés, the Austrians

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

gested a fourth solution—flight. In order to defend his proposition he decided to come to Paris. It was madness, for as a foreigner, with a warrant out for his arrest, he risked his life in order to rescue Marie Antoinette from her agony. Furnished with forged papers and disguised as a courier, he managed to enter Paris on Monday, 13 February 1792.

Without being recognised he entered the château “by his usual route” and did not leave the Queen’s apartment during the whole of the following day. At six o’clock in the evening he finally saw Louis XVI.

The King refused to repeat the Varennes adventure. The National Guards were closely stationed not only round the château but also round the apartments. “In fact,” wrote Axel, “he feels scrupulous about it, having so often promised to remain, for he is an honest man.”

On 23 February Axel left Paris, apparently without having seen Marie Antoinette again. During the following night, he crossed the frontier without trouble. Would he succeed in persuading the Allies to fly to the help of the prisoners of the Tuileries? Unfortunately his strongest supports gave way: King Gustavus was wounded by Captain Anckarström during a ball at the Stockholm Opera House and died a fortnight later on 30 March.

Deprived of Sweden’s help, would Austria and Prussia still enter into a war with France? It was France which took the first step.

At that time Louis XVI had a constitutional Ministry, the Feuillant Ministry, as the moderate deputies were called. They wanted peace, whereas the Girondins wanted to fight Austria. Lessart, the Minister for War, concealed from the Assembly certain news which might have touched off a conflict. He was impeached and the Ministry fell.

The monarchy now had only four more months to live, and these four months would see the birth and death of the last of the lost opportunities—that of Dumouriez. The Gironde had forced Louis XVI to leave the Convention on 20 June 1792.

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

Dumouriez wanted to be a second Mirabeau and save the monarchy. This was reckoning without Marie Antoinette, who could not bring herself to consent to the monarchy's being put under guardianship.

For her, help could come only from abroad. In any case, everyone wanted war, but for different reasons, from the Girondins and Marie Antoinette to Francis of Austria, son of Leopold, who had just succeeded his father and saw in the Revolution an enemy to be struck down.

There was a pretext ready, for Austria had authorised Condé's army to assemble on its territory.

War—a war which, with truces, was to last for 23 years—was imminent. Dumouriez explained his clever plan to the Council held at the Tuileries on 25 March. Marie Antoinette wrote to Mercy the next day: "M. Dumouriez, no longer in doubt as to the agreement between the Powers, owing to the troop movements, has formed the scheme of being the first to start with an attack in Savoy and another by the Liège country. M. de Lafayette's army would be used in the second attack. This is the result of yesterday's Council."

One cannot help starting as one reads what for us is clear and definite treachery. But Marie Antoinette did not in any way consider herself to be Queen of the France of 1792. The woman who, to save her life and that of her children, calls her family to help her has the right to plead extenuating circumstances.

Finally, on 20 April, Louis XVI "formally proposed" to the Assembly "a war against the King of Hungary and Bohemia." As was to be expected, when the French offensive began—the offensive whose plans the Queen had sent to Austria and Prussia—there was a rout. Naturally, Marie Antoinette and "the Austrian committee" were accused.

This accusation enabled the Girondins to pass a series of important measures. The constitutional guard given to Louis XVI some months before was dismissed; the non-juring priests were to be deported; and a camp of 20,000 Federalists was

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

measure. No longer in agreement with his Girondin Ministers, Louis XVI dismissed them, with the exception of Dumouriez, whom he tried to keep. But on 16 June, being unable to persuade the King to give way, the General preferred to resign. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette did nothing to hold him back, not realising that their last defender went with him—the only man who might have been able to prevent the Girondins from launching Paris on the attack against the château.



## The Widow Capet

ON THE EVENING of Tuesday, 19 June, Paris was in a ferment. On the next day it was to celebrate the anniversary of the oath of the Jeu de Paume (it was also a year since the King had tried to escape), and Louis XVI had chosen the eve of the Republican festivities to declare to the Assembly that he definitely opposed his veto to the decrees. The suburbs seethed with faces only seen in Paris on sinister occasions. Here and there armed groups formed. There was a rumour that 18,000 "knights of the poniard" had gathered at the château and that the King "had been to confession and made his will." There was one dominating cry: they must go to the Assembly and insist on the suppression of the vetoes. The Directory of the Department—a body somewhat like the present Prefecture of the Seine—had pronounced "all assemblies against the law." Roederer, the *Procureur Général Syndic* (or Prefect), reminded the municipal officers of this, but they, being completely overtaken by events, "agreed in saying that the citizens seemed to them to have the most peaceful intentions, but that they insisted with the greatest stubbornness in going armed" (to the Assembly).

At eight o'clock on Wednesday morning the Minister of the Interior, Terrier, asserted that "the night's news was not alarming," but at nine o'clock, his eyes having been opened, he sent a cry of alarm to the Directory, asking them "without delay" to "give the order to the troops to march to defend the château." Apparently no order was given and only the usual posts of the National Guard protected the Tuileries. All that was done was to close the gates.

An hour later the crowd began to gather. The intention of the "Piques," as they were called, was still merely to march to the

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

Assembly to present the wishes of the petitioners. "We ask you to inquire into the causes of the inaction of our armies. If it results from the executive power then the latter should be abolished. The blood of patriots must not flow to satisfy the pride and ambition of the perfidious château of the Tuileries."

The results of a deliberation with 20,000 armed men at the door may be foreseen. At two o'clock, there began the procession "of citizens from all sections, mingled with detachments of the National Guard and led by Santerre and Saint-Huruge. The men were armed with pikes, axes, paring-knives, knives and sticks; some of the women carried sabres. Various emblems were displayed, on which could be read menacing inscriptions, such as 'Down with the veto! Warning to Louis XVI: The people are tired of suffering. Liberty or death!' An old pair of black breeches was seen on the end of a pike, and above it the words: 'Long live the SANS-CULOTTES! Down with the veto.'"

The crowd flowed on towards the Tuileries. There was a shout from the garden as the gates gave way. The tide of people rushed in.

Marie Antoinette heard the clamour growing nearer. This time she was not the only one to be attacked. "To hell with the veto! Down with Monsieur Veto!"

There was a dull sound—the tramp of feet on the steps of the great staircase, then a crashing noise—the cannon being hoisted to the first floor. The rioters were massed in the great vestibule which took up the whole of the first floor of the central wing of the château. Marie Antoinette, whose apartments were on the ground floor, could hear a door overhead being broken down with an axe.

The unhappy woman wanted to seek refuge with the King, who on the first floor had gone to meet the raging crowd, but the Princesse de Lamballe stopped her.

"What have I to fear? The worst would be to be killed!"

Her women dragged her in haste to the Dauphin's apartments. The child was no longer there, for his valet had taken

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

him to Madame Royale. At last Marie Antoinette was able to press her two children in her arms. All three hid in a little passage separating the Dauphin's bedroom from the King's, the door of which was hidden in the woodwork and could not easily be seen.

They had to wait a long time. The tumult about them grew louder and the threats of death fiercer. Finally, someone came to tell her that Louis XVI and his sister, hemmed in by the rioters who milled about them, were in the *Ceil-de-Bœuf*. A "Chevalier de Saint-Louis" held the King's left hand and his right was grasped by Garland de Saint-Farre, director of the Théâtre de Minerve, formerly "Les Enfants Comiques."

The *Piques* were still looking for the Queen. The noise of doors being shattered by axes drew nearer. The first room of the Dauphin's apartments was forced open. Marie Antoinette had to leave her hiding-place.

"Let me go to the King, my duty calls me there!"

Weeping, she advanced towards the mass of armed men. An habitué of the Tuileries, the Chevalier de Rougeville, one of the "knights of the poniard," stopped her.

"Where are you going, Madame?"

"To the King. I count on you, Monsieur, to help me to reach him. It is only with me that the people are angry. I am going to offer them their victim."

But Rougeville, paying no attention to the Queen, bore her off to the Council Room, which had not yet been invaded. The Chevalier asked Marie Antoinette to sit with her children and her ladies behind a heavy table, which was pushed into a corner of the room.

Meanwhile, the crowd was still pressing round the King, demanding that he withdraw his veto and threatening "to come back every day."

"Force will have no effect on me and I am above terror."

He was handed a red bonnet; he put it on, accepted everything, but refused to yield.

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

Pétion, now the Mayor of Paris, finally appeared at the Tuileries. It was six o'clock. Since early afternoon he had been at the Hôtel de Ville, watching the crowd go by. He advanced towards the King. "Sire, I have *this moment* heard of the situation you are in."

"That is very surprising," Louis XVI replied calmly. "This has been going on for two hours."

Pétion was hoisted on to the shoulders of two grenadiers. The King rang a bell and the Mayor began his speech. "The people have done what they should. You have acted with the pride and dignity of free men. But this is enough. Let each man retire."

Louis XVI put forward a suggestion: "I have had the state apartments opened. If the people file past on the gallery side they will enjoy seeing them."

It was not easy to change the rioters into peaceful visitors, but curiosity won, and the crowd passed through the state bedroom. The door of the Council Room was then opened. Everyone halted, astonished. Marie Antoinette, whom they had been looking for everywhere, was there behind the table, on which the Dauphin was standing. Santerre came forward the first, calling to the grenadiers who were protecting the Queen and the little group of women around her. "Make way for the people to enter and see the Queen!"

The people slowly walked past the table. Very pale, but holding her head erect, Marie Antoinette watched these men and women brandishing whips and carrying placards. The crowd pressed in from the courtyards and the neighbouring streets, mounted the staircase and filed through. Gradually they became simply sightseers, following their leaders.

At eight o'clock in the evening the masquerade was over. Shattered doors lay on the ground, and there was broken glass under foot. The cannon had staved in the floor-boards. Louis XVI was at last able to rejoin his wife. His sister and children threw themselves in his arms. The Queen looked at him, hor-

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

rified. He had forgotten to take off the red bonnet the rioters had put on his head.

"I still exist, but it is by a miracle," wrote Marie Antoinette to Fersen. "The 20th was an appalling day. It is no longer against me that they are most enraged, but against my husband's very life, and they do not conceal it."

The château was no more than a tempest-tossed wreck. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette lived there like castaways, their ears open to the sinister rumours that reached them. "The band of assassins grows constantly larger," wrote Marie Antoinette.

The Queen sometimes longed for the final and immediate catastrophe. Anything seemed preferable to this protracted agony. In the galleries, as the sovereigns passed by, the National Guards cried: "Down with Veto!" The chapel orchestra played the "*Ça ira!*" when the King and Queen entered. The gardens were full of fanatics, who yelled when they saw a curtain drawn aside.

Occasionally she had a moment of hope. It was not possible that her nephew Francis should leave her in this terrible situation and not do everything he could to overthrow the French troops and reach Paris. She constantly urged Fersen: "Ours is a dreadful situation . . . time presses and it is impossible to wait longer."

It was on 25 July that the Duke of Brunswick proclaimed the Manifesto at Coblenz, threatening Paris with military force "if the least violence or the least outrage is committed against Their Majesties the King and Queen." The text was soon all over Paris and caused an explosion. The arrival on 30 July of the Confederates from Marseilles increased the tension. The final attack was imminent. The remaining adherents never left the Tuileries, which they tried, as well as they could, to prepare for resistance.

"The King and Queen are preparing a counter-revolution," the agitators repeated. In the King's mind it was only a ques-

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

tion of defending himself; in that of the people it was a question of attacking the "patriots" once the Royalists had gathered strength.

Curiously enough, in spite of what many historians have said, there were no misgivings in the Tuileries on the evening of 9 August. To be convinced of this one has only to read the fragment of the unpublished diary written by the Abbé Gallois, the chapel sacristan.

"It is nine o'clock and have just got ready for the night," wrote the Abbé before going to bed. At half-past two he awoke and wrote: "I can hear the tocsin sounding and the alarm being beaten, which indicates that vigorous action is being prepared."

In fact the bells of Paris were giving the signal not for an attack on the château, but for an attack on the Hôtel de Ville. Commissioners appointed by the sections of Paris were occupied in dismissing a municipality which was too respectful of formalities and in replacing it by a "revolutionary *commune*."

The Abbé was a sound sleeper, for the tocsin had begun to sound just before one o'clock at the church of the Cordeliers. By half-past two all the churches in Paris were answering the signal given by Danton. Marie Antoinette, who had not gone to bed, listened to the alarming sound of the bells ringing through the stifling night.

Roederer brought reassuring news. Undoubtedly, as Pétion had announced, the suburb of Saint-Antoine was "in a ferment"; "the citizens are stationed before their houses, armed and ready to march," but there were only 1,500 to 2,000 men assembled.

"The tocsin is having no results," someone came to inform them. The King went to lie down in his room.

Suddenly the tocsin ceased and everyone felt relieved. "I conclude that no one is coming," wrote the Abbé. In front of the window Marie Antoinette continued to look out over Paris. The heavy silence which followed the sound of the bells seemed even more menacing. Her presentiments had not deceived her; the Marquis de Mandat, commander of the National Guard, had

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

been summoned to the Municipality and cut down on the steps of the Hôtel de Ville. His body was thrown into the Seine. In him the Tuileries lost its only defender.

Marie Antoinette went to look for Louis XVI. Woken from a heavy sleep he staggered into the *Œil-de-Bœuf*. His wig was flattened and unpowdered from where he had slept on it. Roederer proposed taking refuge in the Assembly. Marie Antoinette raised her head.

"Monsieur, there are troops here. It is time to find out who will be the stronger, the King and the Constitution or the factions."

Marie Antoinette was calm. There was no excitement, no anger, no despair, and no useless bravado either. Roederer was to say: "During this fatal night the Queen made no show of masculinity or heroics, was neither affected nor romantic; I saw no rage or despair in her, nor any spirit of revenge. She was a woman, a mother and a wife in danger."

The suburb began to make its way toward the Tuileries. In the gardens and courtyards the troops who were to defend the château lined up. Three cannons were placed facing the Carrousel. Two more were put on the terrace. Urged by his wife, Louis XVI went down to review the defenders. The drums beat the general salute. From a window Marie Antoinette watched the scene. Nothing less royal could be imagined than the fat man in a grey suit and flattened wig, who with a gloomy look passed silently in front of the men who were to die for him. A great shout of "Long live the Nation!" drowned the applause of the Swiss Guards and royalist companies of the National Guards. Some gunners left their cannon and came to insult the King. Marie Antoinette could hear their cries: "Down with the veto! Down with the fat pig!"

The poor man stammered: "I love the National Guard."

Pale, "as though he had ceased to exist," according to a witness, he returned to the château. Some of the gunners were already leaving their posts to join the vanguard of the *Plaine*

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

"Half-past seven," wrote the Abbé in his attic. "Word has just come that they have arrived and are at present in the Carrousel."

"Sire," said Roederer at the same moment, "Your Majesty has not five minutes to lose. You will find safety only in the National Assembly. We are no longer begging you, we no longer take the liberty of giving you advice. There is only one thing for us to do at this moment; we ask your permission to take you away."

"What!" said Marie Antoinette, "are we alone, can no one do anything?"

"Yes, Madame, alone. Action is useless, resistance impossible."

"The King raised his head," wrote Roederer, "looked fixedly at me for a few seconds, then, turning to the Queen, he said: 'Let us go,' and rose."

At the top of the staircase Roederer cried: "The King and his family are going to the Assembly alone, with no other accompaniment than the Ministers and a guard. Make way for them!"

Surrounded by a body of National Guards, the King preceded the Queen, who, "red and weeping," held her son by the hand. Behind her came Madame Royale, Madame Elisabeth, the Princesse de Lamballe, Mme de Tourzel, the Ministers and a handful of faithful supporters.

The little group moved slowly towards the garden sparkling in the sunshine.

Now that the King had gone, the best thing for the defenders would have been for them to go too, but old Maréchal de Mailly, who was 84, considered that for him the finest end would be to die with his sword in his hand and, taking the command on himself, he proceeded to transform the château into a fortress.

During the remaining fourteen months of her life Marie Antoinette was to hear herself accused of having, on that morning, "caused the people to be fired upon."



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

The Assembly was occupied with the report "concerning the gradual abolition of the slave trade," when it was announced that the Revolutionary Commune of Paris had arisen in opposition to them. Without being greatly disturbed the deputies referred "these details" to a committee and were about to go back to their negroes when the royal family entered the hall.

Did the King utter those dignified words attributed to him by the *Moniteur*? "I have come here to avoid a great crime and I believe that I cannot be safer than among you."

The President replied cautiously: "Sire, you may count on the firmness of the National Assembly."

This "firmness" consisted first of all in shutting the King and his family up in a little office behind the President's chair. From this cupboard, which was unbearably hot, the Queen saw her last hopes crumble. Near by, the cannon and musket fire raged. Would the Swiss Guards succeed in holding the château, in spite of the order sent by Louis XVI to cease firing?

The gunfire died away, and soon only a few shots could be heard. Finally there was silence: the château had surrendered.

The deputies were no longer the masters, in spite of their "firmness." The Commune, Robespierre, Marat and Danton were in command. But there was still no question of the Temple prison. Once calm was re-established the royal family would be allowed to reside in the Luxembourg. Gradually the tone changed. The Assembly was a passive herd, harassed by the delegations, who, incited by the Commune, continually demanded the deposition of the monarchy.

In the evening the royal family were placed in the little cells of the Feuillants convent next to the Manège. At the end of the corridor, behind a grille, a mad crowd shouted threats of death.

At half-past seven on Saturday, 11 August, they were once more led to the little press-box. Throughout the day they had to listen to long discussions on their future residence. The Assembly suggested the house of the Minister of Justice in the Place Ven-

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

rounded by houses through which it would be very easy to escape." Why should the Assembly not entrust the Commune with guarding the prisoners? In the evening Manuel suggested putting "the King with his wife and their sister" in the Temple.

The frightened deputies pretended to think that by the Temple was meant the former palace of the Comte d'Artois and they left "to the Commune of Paris the task of fixing the King's residence and entrusted them with guarding him." It was the gesture of Pilate. The Queen, too, had no thought of the famous keep with its four towers of medieval appearance, which stood in the gardens of the Temple and which she had often asked her brother-in-law to pull down.

At six o'clock the royal family, the Princesse de Lamballe, Mme de Tourzel, her daughter Pauline, Manuel, the Procureur of the Commune, the magistrate Colonge and Pétion, "once more mayor by the people's choice," squeezed themselves into one of the large court coaches harnessed with only two horses. It took an hour to reach the brilliantly lighted palace by way of the boulevards. The Commune had done things well: the meal prepared by the *Bouche* was worthy of the Tuileries.

It is not known who had the courage to announce to the King and Queen, at the end of their meal, that they were not to reside in the palace. Towards one o'clock in the morning the municipal officers preceded Marie Antoinette to the medieval keep which was henceforth to be her dwelling. As she crossed the garden her ears were assailed by singing:

Madame is mounting to her tower,  
Who knows when she'll descend?

After dinner on 3 September, at about three o'clock, Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI were playing backgammon in the Queen's room on the first floor of the small tower of the Temple.

Marie Antoinette was at last able to breathe freely, after the terrible days of 20 June and 10 August and the anguished nights at the Tuileries and the Feuillants. Protected by a num-

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

erous guard, she enjoyed relative tranquillity. The worst seemed to be over. Certainly there were many more humiliations in store for her. Already, during the night of 19-20 August, the Princesse de Lamballe, Mme de Tourzel, her daughter Pauline, the three waiting-women and the King's two valets had been snatched from their beds and taken God knew where.

What fresh danger could she fear? The only penalty contained in the constitution was deposition. But above all, Marie Antoinette clung desperately to the idea of an Austrian victory. Learning from her jailers the capture of Verdun and the threat to Longwy, she found it difficult to conceal her feeling of hope. These defeats had aroused a great deal of excitement around the prison. The alarm gun had been fired and the tocsin had rung sombrely. The day before, Cléry, the Dauphin's valet, had announced "that there was a commotion in Paris" and that "the people were going to the prisons." The municipal guards were shortly to refuse to allow the royal family to walk in the garden. During dinner the drums were still heard beating and a few cries came from the direction of the Rue de Temple.

Now there was calm. Only a confused murmur came from the garden—doubtless from the workmen who were building a wall around the tower. Suddenly a piercing cry came from the little ground-floor dining room, where Cléry and the Tisons, the servants installed by the Commune, were beginning their dinner. A few seconds later Cléry appeared in the room, haggard, his eyes full of horror. He looked at the Queen and said nothing. He could not speak of what he had just seen on the end of a pike, framed in the window—the severed head of the Princesse de Lamballe.

The Princesse had been murdered during the night in the prison of La Force. The officers of the guard had not been able to prevent this bloody masquerade from yelling at the foot of the tower and shouting for the Queen.

One of the municipal guards drew the blue taffeta curtains. "They are spreading the rumour that you and your family are

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

no longer in the tower," the officer explained. "They want you to appear at the window, but we will not allow it."

The cries grew louder. Other municipal guards appeared in the room; they were ghastly pale. Marie Antoinette, seized with anguish, asked what was being hidden from her. There was a tall fellow there, whose sword struck against the velvet chairs. Marie Antoinette looked at him and the man explained "in the coarsest possible tones: 'They want to hide from you the head of the Lamballe which has been brought here to show you how the people takes its revenge on tyrants. I advise you to appear.'"

But Marie Antoinette did not hear the end of the sentence. "Frozen with horror," without a cry, she fell in a faint.

Once more the storm moved away. For three months Marie Antoinette was to live in calm.

On Friday, 7 December the King announced a piece of news which Cléry had learned the day before from his wife. In four days' time his trial before the Convention would begin.

At dawn on Tuesday, 11 December, Marie Antoinette heard the alarm sounded. The whole enclosure of the Temple was full of noise. Cannons were even placed in the garden. The King was fetched to be taken to the Convention. Marie Antoinette was not to see her husband for another six weeks. She tried to convince herself that as the constitution pronounced the King "irresponsible" the outcome of the trial, now that France was a Republic, would merely be to exile Louis and his family.

Her illusions were short-lived. A few days earlier the "Commune of the 10 August" had been replaced by a "provisional Municipality." Through Cléry and Turgu, a serving-lad who had been in the kitchen at the Tuileries, she received news of the accused. Did she know that on Christmas morning, alone in the prison where he had been confined by his subjects, the King seemed to have been touched by Grace? Louis XVI wrote his will: "I commend my children to my wife. I have never doubted her maternal tenderness for them. I charge her par-

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

ticularly to make of them good Christians and honest men, to make them look on the grandeurs of this world (if they should be fated to experience them) merely as dangerous and transitory advantages, and to fix their eyes on the sole reliable and lasting glory of eternity. I beg my sister to continue in her tenderness for my children and to be a mother to them if they have the misfortune to lose their own."

Perhaps he had guessed that when he was gone Marie Antoinette could not hope for a pardon.

"I beg my wife to forgive me all the evil she is suffering for my sake and the grief I may have caused her during the course of our marriage, *as she may be sure that I hold nothing against her, if she should think she had anything with which to reproach herself.*"

The paper-sellers cried the news. One of them, a pedlar with a stentorian voice, had been paid by a friend of the Queen to shout out a summary of his paper in the Rue de la Cordonerie, not far from the tower. On Sunday, 20 January, Marie Antoinette heard him cry: "The National Convention decrees that Louis Capet shall undergo the death penalty. . . . The execution shall take place within 24 hours of its notification to the prisoner."

The "notification" took place at two o'clock, so the execution was to take place the following day. Marie Antoinette passed the day in sobbing. In the evening, at about eight o'clock, the two landing doors burst open; she and her family had been sent for, as the Convention had given permission for the condemned man to see them.

The scene took place in the dining-room. The Queen appeared first, holding her son by the hand, and then came the two Princesses. All threw themselves into the King's arms. The Abbé Edgeworth de Firmont, who had come to help the condemned man, remained in a little room in one of the small towers. In spite of himself he was a witness of the scene. "No pen can ever describe how heartrending it was. For nearly a

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

quarter-of-an-hour not a word was spoken. The King, the Queen, Madame Elisabeth, Monsieur le Dauphin and Madame lamented together. Finally the tears ceased. They spoke in low tones, and fairly calmly."

Louis related his trial at length, the questions put to him, which he had not expected and which had confounded him, and the presence among his "judges" of his cousin Orléans. Unconditional death had been voted for by 361 deputies, and since 361 was an absolute majority the King had been condemned by a majority of one vote. Without the vote of Philippe-Egalité Louis XVI would have escaped the scaffold. The former Duc de Chartres, the friend of Opera balls, the man with whom Marie Antoinette had danced at her marriage had voted for the death penalty.

The little Dauphin, who in a few hours would be King, stood between his father's knees.

"My son, promise me never to think of avenging my death." Taking the child in his arms, he added: "You heard what I just said? Lift your hand and swear that you will fulfill your father's last wishes."

At a quarter-past ten the King rose. When Cléry entered the room he saw Marie Antoinette holding her husband's arm and making a few steps towards the door "uttering cries of the deepest grief."

"I assure you," said the King, "that I shall see you tomorrow at eight o'clock."

How far they were now from the time when, in Mme de Polignac's house, the clock was put on so that the spoil-sport would go to bed earlier! Was remorse mingled with those tears? Marie Antoinette, indeed, had often blushed for her husband's blunders and coarseness. He had so often embarrassed her. But this King, who was soon to be executed by his subjects, lacked neither goodness nor greatness of soul.

"As long as I reign my first care will be to see that religion is respected and to watch over the maintenance of morality."

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

Did Marie Antoinette remember the remark of the Maréchal de Richelieu?

"Each of the three branches of the House of Bourbon has a dominating and pronounced taste: the eldest loves hunting, the d'Orléans pictures and the Condés war."

"And Louis XVI?" someone asked.

"Ah! he is different. He loves the people!"

This was meant to be ironical, but it was only too true. Louis XVI did indeed love the common people, whose representatives had voted his death. But all these qualities had been frustrated by his hesitation, his habit of "detaching himself," his perpetual weakness.

How he had loved her, too! He had loved her to the point of deferring to her feelings for Axel. This inadequate lover felt that perhaps he had no right, once the succession was assured, to prevent his wife from enjoying a few moments of happiness.

In default of passion, she gradually came to feel a great tenderness for him. This good man—this "honest man," as Fersen called him—finally moved her.

And now this calm in the face of death, this "martyr's courage," touched her in the very depths of her heart. Perhaps, during that long night, she believed she loved him.

At six o'clock the heavy doors of the apartment opened noisily. It was only an officer asking for Madame Elisabeth's missal for the condemned man's Mass. The door shut again and the bolts were pulled to.

A misty day was dawning. Detachments of cavalry entered the enclosure, and then "a great rumour" was heard. "General" Santerre, followed by municipal officers and gendarmes, mounted the staircase. The Queen stood near the door. Why did they not come to take her to her husband?

"It costs me a great deal to go without receiving their last embrace," the King was sighing at that moment.

He then turned to Cléry. "I entrust you with my farewells to them."

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

Suddenly Marie Antoinette heard trumpets sound under her windows. Surrounded by gendarmes, Louis XVI crossed the garden and turned round twice to look at the keep. In the distance she could now hear a vast muffled beating of drums, which gradually faded away and became indistinct. It was eight o'clock.

At half-past ten, in the distance, salvos of artillery were heard. Louis XVI's head had just rolled on the scaffold.

The drums of the Temple guards were beating. Under the windows of the keep the sentries cried: "Long live the Republic!" The Queen understood. Her body shaken with sobs, Marie Antoinette sank on to her bed. Suddenly she rose, went to kneel before her son and saluted him with the title of King.

The "widow Capet" was able to procure "full mourning" dresses, "waxed" shoes, underskirts of *histaly* and even a black taffeta fan.

She refused to go down to the garden, as she did not want to pass Louis XVI's door. She would remain for hours seated in her green and white damask chair and knitting by the window, which was still obstructed by the shutter. She had become "extremely emaciated," according to a witness, and preserved a gloomy silence.

This prostration touched one of the officers on duty, the Toulousain Toulan. This fanatical revolutionary, who had been at the taking of the Tuileries on 10 August, had become profoundly royalist soon after first going on guard at the Temple. It is said that he was in love with Marie Antoinette and it is quite possible. By her charm, her voice and her smile the Queen was always able to arouse extraordinary devotion. On the day after the King's death he made a serious decision—to help Marie Antoinette escape from the Temple.

Was it, as has been affirmed, a mad, unrealisable scheme? Certainly not. At the beginning of the royal family's captivity the Temple tower was not, in spite of what has been said, a fortress completely cut off from the land of the living. One could enter with comparative ease—and consequently leave also.



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

Marie Antoinette knew this. When Toulan declared he could arrange for her to escape with her children and Madame Elisabeth her heart beat with hope. But she did not want to continue with the scheme before consulting with General de Jarjayes, who, it may be remembered, had been the intermediary between Barnave and the Queen. On the King's orders he had remained in Paris. One may imagine his stupefaction—and his fear—when on 2 February 1793, Toulan, all blazing with the tricolour, came to see him. Toulan was armed with a note from the Queen: "You may trust the man who will speak to you on my behalf and will hand you this note. His sentiments are known to me. During the last five months he has never wavered."

Without wanting to go any further, Jarjayes asked Toulan if he could get him into the Temple. With all the southerner's power of invention Toulan managed to persuade the "Illuminator," who came every day to look after the lamps in the Temple, to lend him his clothes for a "patriotic" friend who wanted the pleasure of contemplating the Queen "in her fetters." The lamplighter agreed and Jarjayes was able to have his interview with Marie Antoinette without difficulty.

The plan of escape took shape, but for it to succeed Turgu, who was on their side, and a second officer had to be informed of the plot. The municipal officer Lepitre was chosen.

Mounting guard at the Temple had become a tiresome job for the municipal officers, and so Toulan and Lepitre frequently proposed replacing their colleagues.

Toulan and Lepitre appeared very fat when they entered the Temple. On occasion they entered the prison with hats on and left it bare-headed. They and Jarjayes had decided that Marie Antoinette and her sister-in-law should leave the tower dressed as municipal officers. "It was enough to show one's card from a distance not to be stopped by the sentries," Lepitre explained. The little King would be placed in a dirty linen basket covered with cloths such as Turgu regularly took out of the prison each week. As for Madame Royale, she would be dressed

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

came with the lamplighter. The royal family would thus escape in four groups after the Tisons had been put to sleep with a powerful narcotic.

"Our plans were so laid," wrote Lepitre, "that no one could set out in our pursuit until five hours after we had left. We had calculated everything." Lepitre recounted all this with cheerful optimism—in 1817. In 1793 he was considerably more indecisive. Having received an advance of 200,000 francs from Jarjays (20 million nowadays), he was so long in making out the passports that Jarjays became anxious. The four disguises seemed too risky to him. Only the Queen's escape appeared "practicable."

But Marie Antoinette refused to leave her son. "We dreamed a beautiful dream, no more," she wrote to Jarjays, "but we have gained much from it, as this occasion has provided further proofs of your total devotion to me. My confidence in you is unbounded. You will always find that I have character and courage but my son's interests are the only ones that guide me. However happy I should have been to escape from here I cannot consent to be separated from him."

There was nothing more for Jarjays to do in Paris. Marie Antoinette asked him to take to the "Regent"—the Comte de Provence—the seal with the arms of France and the King's wedding-ring, on which was engraved: "M.A.A.A. 19 aprilis 1770," the wedding-ring which had been blessed in the Augustine's Church in Vienna at the marriage by proxy and which Marie Antoinette had brought with her to France. Louis XVI had given it to Cléry on the morning of 21 January, telling him "to give it to his wife, and to tell her that it grieved him to part with it."

With the wedding-ring and the seal, which were intended for the future Louis XVIII, Marie Antoinette sent an impression from a seal, intended for Fersen. "The impression I send is something quite different. I want you to give it to the person whom you know to have come to see me from Brussels last winter and to tell him . . ."

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

been more true." It shows a pigeon in full flight, Axel's emblem which Marie Antoinette had adopted. The bird was surmounted by a motto: *Tutto a te me guida*—Everything leads me to you.

The Toulon affair was to have its sequel. Furious because one day she had not been allowed to see her daughter, Tison's wife denounced the Toulousian, the terrified Lepitre and all the officers who had "trucked to the widow Capet." Furthermore she indicated that the prisoners were able to correspond with people outside the prison, thanks to Turgot. Having made her denunciation, the unhappy woman became a prey to remorse. It was even worse when, on the evening of 29 June, she learned that the Committee of Public Safety had decided to take the little King from his mother.

Tison's wife was convinced that this terrible step was the result of her declaration. Realising how great the Queen's grief would be, she became frightened and threw herself at the prisoner's feet. "Madame, I ask Your Majesty's pardon. I am very unhappy. I am the cause of your death and that of Madame Elisabeth."

She shrieked and fell into convulsions. The next day eight men had difficulty in carrying her out of the tower; she had gone mad.

In her ravings she had not revealed anything about the Committee's decision and when Marie Antoinette went to bed on 3 July she had not the slightest suspicion that anything was to happen.

At ten o'clock there was a knock on the door. A group of men entered. The voice of the man who had to read the decree trembled.

Without at first understanding what it was about, Marie Antoinette looked at him. What! They were taking away her son?

"Never!"

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

cries," throwing himself into his mother's arms. The officers approached the bed and Marie Antoinette stepped between them. She would never consent to give up her child. Madame Royale, the only eye-witness, related: "The officers threatened to use violence and to summon the guard to take him away by force. An hour went by in discussions, in insults and threats from the officers, in pleading and tears from all of us. Finally my mother consented to give up her son. We got him up and when he was dressed my mother handed him over to the officers, bathing him in tears, as though she could see into the future and knew she would never see him again. The poor little boy embraced us all tenderly," concludes Madame Royale, "and went out weeping with the men." The cobbler, Simon, was waiting for him in Louis XVI's bedroom, where he was to live with his "ward."

For an hour Marie Antoinette had defended her son's bed. When, on the following day, she learned who was the "tutor" chosen by the Commune, she was overwhelmed. From her room she could hear her son's sobs, which went on for two days. The child's despair was so great that Simon did not dare to take him down into the garden. Surprised at not seeing him, the soldiers of the guard murmured: "He is no longer in the Temple."

The Committee of General Security became alarmed and on 7 July sent four of its members to the tower. They found the child somewhat calmer. "Capet's son was playing quietly at draughts with his mentor." His tears seemed dried and the members of the Convention decided to take him down into the garden.

For hours on end Marie Antoinette watched from a little window in one of the towers "to see her son pass at a distance when his guardian led him to the roof of the tower." She was now no more than a shadow. This time they had taken everything from her, even her heart.

Very soon little Louis would listen without flinching to his "tutor's" advice and would follow him to the guillotine.

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

ordinary diligence. Chaumette and Hébert had advised Simon to turn the "whelp" into a perfect *sans-culotte*. The cobbler was completely successful and in a few weeks the goal was reached. Pleased at behaving "like a man," at making the officers laugh, delighted to be able to indulge in everything he had hitherto been forbidden to do, the little King had become as badly brought-up as the lowest "patriot." With anguish Marie Antoinette heard him utter "dreadful oaths against God, his family and the aristocrats."

*Her chou d'amour!*

## The Trial

SHORTLY AFTER NOON, on 1 August, through the windows, which were open on account of the stifling heat, the prisoners could hear a noise with which they were now familiar: a murmur interrupted by trumpets and orders being shouted in the palace courtyard.

It was the usual inspection. This time Hanriot, commander of the armed forces of Paris, hardly glanced at the prisoner's apartments. He was much more anxious about the "lack of artillery" of the Temple garrison. He therefore ordered fresh measures of surveillance: the commanders of the guard would receive munitions and from that evening the gunners were to stand by their guns.

This decision to order a state of siege at the Temple was a result of the taking of Valenciennes, where Fersen's regiment had formerly been stationed. The road to the capital was open. In Brussels Axel was forming a plan "to drive with a large force of cavalry towards Paris, which would be all the easier since there was no army ahead and all the barns were full of provisions."

Once these security measures were taken the Committee decided, in order to avoid a surprise attack, to make the Allies believe that the Queen was about to be brought to trial. They might then be able to exchange Marie Antoinette's life for an advantageous peace treaty.

Still on 1 August Barère, in reply to the taking of Valenciennes, cried in the Tribune of the Convention: "Is it our forgetfulness of the Austrian woman's crimes, is it our indifference towards the Capet family that have thus deceived our enemies? Well then, it is time to root out every trace of the monarchy!"

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

Without further hesitation the Convention voted the decree referring "the widow Capet" to the Revolutionary Tribunal.

When the news reached Brussels both Allies and Emigrés were convinced that the Queen's last hour had struck. They simply did not understand that it was merely an offer to negotiate, and from fear of hastening the prisoner's end they even gave up Axel's scheme of invasion.

The government did not delay in carrying out its threat. A few hours after the Convention's vote, during the night of 1-2 August, four police administrators, headed by Michonis and surrounded by officers of the guard, read to Marie Antoinette the decree transferring her to the Conciergerie to be sent to the "Tribunal extraordinary." Without a word she rose, and helped by her daughter and sister-in-law, she prepared a parcel of her clothes. Then, in the presence of the men who had invaded her room and who refused to leave her by herself, she dressed.

She was urged to hurry. She embraced her daughter, telling her to "take courage and care of her health," entrusted her children to her sister-in-law, and without looking back left the room in which she had lived for more than nine months.

It is difficult to pass by the Conciergerie without looking up at the first floor of Caesar's tower. There, at the beginning of year II, was the office of Antoine-Quentin Fouquier de Tinville, son of the "seigneur of Hérœul and other places," former prosecutor at the Châtlet and since March 1793 citizen Fouquier-Tinville, Public Prosecutor of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

From his window he could see the cartloads of condemned people crossing the Pont-au-Change. The Convention's decree committing the widow Capet to his Tribunal had whetted his appetite. But days passed and the Government seemed not to want to send him the prisoner. On 25 August he could bear it no longer and wrote to the Committee: "The Tribunal is attacked in the newspapers and in the public places because it has not yet dealt with the affair of the former Queen."

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

The *Section de l'Unité* asked, nay begged, "that the widow Capet should be definitely judged." The Central Committee of the "Patriotic Society" demanded that "the modern Messalina, this woman who seems to be rejected by nature and society, should be delivered to the vengeance of the law." Letters flowed in to the Committees, the Convention and the Tribunal. The provinces followed Paris's lead, and asked for sentence on "the shameless and despotic woman," the "wretch Antoinette," guilty of the crime of *lèse-nation*. Finally, on 3 October, the Convention decreed that the Revolutionary Tribunal "shall deal immediately and uninterruptedly with the judgement".

Had the Queen a presentiment of what was being plotted against her? An officer of the gendarmerie guarded her in the Conciergerie. Two sentries were stationed before the window, but by speaking very loudly the prisoners in the courtyard had managed to inform Marie Antoinette "that she was to go up."

On 12 October Marie Antoinette had been in bed for two hours when the two doors of her cell were noisily opened. An usher and four gendarmes had come to take her to be questioned. Behind the screen the Queen hastily put on her black dress and then, surrounded by her guards and preceded by a turnkey carrying a torch, she left the cell.

On reaching the first floor the group followed a winding corridor, and finally emerged in the former *Grand-Chambre* of Parliament, the "tabernacle" of the old régime where Louis XVI had held his *lits de justice*. The vast room was now called the Hall of Liberty and had become the seat of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

The Queen was given a seat on a bench in front of Fouquier's desk. In the shadows behind the tall balustrade of the public gallery could be seen a few faces of privileged people invited by Fouquier. The Queen heard murmurs and looked towards the back of the hall, but her short-sighted eyes could distinguish nothing.

The enormous room was lit only by the torches of the gendarmes.



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

of the clerk. The *Grand-Chambre* appeared like a tomb and the Queen was already speaking of herself in the past tense.

"I was called Marie Antoinette de Lorraine d'Autriche."

The question had been put by the young President of the Revolutionary Tribunal, Hermann, who was this evening acting as examining magistrate. He affected an air of compassion, but he was a friend of Robespierre, to whom he owed his promotion (four months earlier he had been only President of the Criminal Tribunal at Arras), and was entirely at the orders of his "chief," Fouquier-Tinville.

Hermann and the other members of the Tribunal—and they were perfectly sincere—had approved of the Convention's vote of regicide. Louis XVI was guilty—guilty of having supported the non-juring priests, guilty of having opposed his veto to the decrees, guilty, as was proved by Barnave's reports, of having played "a double game." If they could prove that the Queen had been the prime instigator of this wavering policy she would be more "criminal" than her husband, who was decreed "irresponsible." This was one of the Prosecutor's aims but in guise of proof Fouquier had only documents relating to the flight to Varennes in 1791.

After the long interrogation, the prisoner and her escort returned to the Conciergerie and Fouquier shut himself up in his office in Caesar's Tower to prepare the indictment.

Sprinkling his text with such phrases as "scourge and blood-sucker of the French . . . full of intrigues of all kinds . . . disordered pleasures . . . criminal intrigues . . . excessive squandering . . . perfidious views," the Prosecutor repeated and amplified all the questions put to the Queen by Hermann. Needless to say, he paid no attention to the accused's replies.

On the following morning at his country house not far from Paris, Chauveau-Lagarde, aged 28, was informed by the clerk of the court that on the previous day he had been appointed to defend "the widow Capet" and that the trial was to begin at eight the next morning.

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

noon arrived at the Conciergerie. "With trembling knees and moist eyes," as he related afterwards, he entered the cell. The Queen greeted him with "majesty and kindness." She spoke to her defender about the interrogation of the day before.

Together with his client Chauveau-Lagarde read the eight pages of the indictment. In order to be able to reply to this farrago he would need time.

"To whom must you apply?" asked the Queen.

"To the National Convention," Chauveau-Lagarde murmured.

To those who had voted for her husband's death. "No, no, never!" she cried, turning her head away.

The lawyer insisted. The Queen might, in the name of her defenders, make "a complaint against a haste which by the terms of the law amounted to a real denial of justice."

Marie Antoinette gave way. Without uttering a word she took the pen held out to her by Chauveau-Lagarde, "let fall a sigh," and wrote to ask the President of the Assembly for a delay of three days, as she owed it to her children "to omit nothing necessary for their mother's entire justification."

When the letter was finished Chauveau-Lagarde went to the Tribunal and gave the request to Fouquier, who promised to send it to the Assembly. He took care not to do so, however. One day he was to give the letter to Robespierre and after 9 Thermidor it was found under the Incorruptible's mattress, together with the Queen's will.

At Brussels, on this same 13 October, Fersen was once more in despair. "Although there are no proofs against this unfortunate Princess, how can one hope for anything with wretches who manufacture proofs when they have none and who condemn simply on vague assertions and on suspicion! No, let us not hope for anything. We must be resigned to the divine will. Her fate is certain. We must be prepared for it and summon strength to bear this terrible blow. I have for long been trying to prepare myself for it and I feel that I shall receive the news

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

A few minutes before eight the usher of the Tribunal, Lieutenant de Busne, and the gendarmes opened the cell door. The Queen was ready. She had put on her worn black dress and had managed to give herself a widow's headdress by adding "weepers" to her lawn bonnet and fixing a crêpe veil under it.

When the crowd saw her enter "free and without fetters," a murmur rang round the *Grand-Chambre*. The public crowding behind the rails had difficulty in recognising the 37-year-old Queen in this woman with white hair and pallid complexion. During the last few months Marie Antoinette had grown so thin and her face had become so sunken that she looked about sixty. She was led to a little platform, where there was an arm-chair so placed "that the accused could be seen by all." Chauveau-Lagarde stood near the Queen. In front of her were the tables adorned with gryphons at which President Hermann was enthroned together with the judges.

Marie Antoinette remained standing while the witnesses took the oath.

"The accused may be seated . . . Your name, surname, age, position, place of birth and residence?"

"My name is Marie Antoinette Lorraine d'Autriche, aged about 38 [she would not be 38 for another 18 days], widow of the King of France, born in Vienna. At the time of my arrest I was in the session hall of the National Assembly."

The clerk Fabricius then read the eight long pages of the indictment. "This is what you are accused of," the President announced. "You will now hear the charges to be brought against you."

The session opened. The Queen listened to the testimony, or rather the interrogation, of the various witnesses.

In default of documents, which should have proved "the accusation of high treason which lies heavily on Antoinette of Austria, widow of the former King," Hermann and Fouquier had only one resource—to assimilate the Queen's trial with the King's (a trial which in any case was only an elimination) and

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

which the last tyrant of France was guilty." Hermann tried to take from each witness's evidence one fact to illustrate his main accusation, but there was nothing to prove "intelligence with foreign Powers," or plots against the safety of the State.

The jurors were asked four questions:

(1) Is it established that there were intrigues and secret dealings with foreign Powers and other external enemies of the Republic, which intrigues and secret dealings aimed at giving them monetary assistance, enabling them to enter French territory and facilitating the progress of their armies there?

(2) Is Marie Antoinette d'Autriche, widow of Louis Capet, *convicted* of having co-operated in these intrigues and of having kept up these secret dealings?

(3) Is it established that there was a plot and conspiracy to start civil war within the Republic?

(4) Is Marie Antoinette d'Autriche, widow of Louis Capet, *convicted* of having taken part in this plot and conspiracy?

It was three o'clock in the morning when the jurors retired, the judges remained in the *Grand-Chambre*. The public, who in spite of the cold had remained for the end of the pleadings, went into the waiting-room, which was almost in total darkness, to join the little groups of interested spectators, friends of the Queen, or Jacobins, striding up and down the room to get warm.

Was she guilty? The trial had not proved it. Juridically she was innocent. Taking away the low gossip, the tittle-tattle of kitchens, backstairs, clubs and the Temple council room, what positive facts for the prosecution remained? The description of "orgies" at Versailles by witnesses who had not been there, the accusation—without any documents to support it—regarding the sums given to the Polignacs, the Queen's influence over her husband vouched for by people who had never been intimate with the royal family. Nothing, absolutely nothing, on what Fouquier called treason.

The trial had in no way shown that Marie Antoinette, more

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

of an Austrian Princess than a Queen of France, obeyed orders from her mother and brother transmitted by Mercy. Nothing had been established, neither her culpable frivolity, her blind friendships, her fatal influence, her intrigues with foreign Powers, nor her vacillating policy, her over-tenacious rancour, her double game in 1791 and her "treachery" in 1792. But for everyone these were obvious facts. The way in which the second and fourth questions were worded, however, would have enabled the jurors to answer "no." Although guilty, the accused was not *convicted* of being so.

Such was the unanimous opinion. "Marie Antoinette will get away with it. She gave her answers like an angel. They will only deport her."

This optimism was not blindness. It was still only the beginning of the Terror. The machine of death, prepared by Fouquier, started work with the Queen's trial.

In a room adjoining the *Grand-Chambre* Marie Antoinette waited in company with Lieutenant de Busne. The Queen, too, was full of hope. As she said, no one had uttered anything positive against her.

At four o'clock the Queen heard the President's bell in the distance. The minutes went slowly by. An usher came to fetch the accused. She was greeted by a menacing silence as she took her place on the platform.

As in a dream she heard: "Yes, to all the questions." Then Fouquier was heard, demanding "that the accused be condemned to death, in accordance with Article One of the first section of the first chapter of the second part of the penal code . . ."

To death! Those must have been the only words she grasped from the text.

"Antoinette," resumed the President, "have you any objection to make to the application of the laws invoked by the Public Prosecutor?"

She had no strength to reply and merely shook her head.

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

Overcome, she left the platform like an automaton. Without a gesture, her head down, "seeing and hearing nothing," according to Chauveau-Lagarde, she crossed the hall. When she arrived at the railings, where even the *tricoteuses* had fallen silent, she raised her head and left the hall. De Busne escorted her bareheaded. On arriving at the darkened Bonbec staircase which led to the courtyard, she murmured: "I can hardly see to walk."

The officer gave her his arm to the foot of the stairs. A few steps farther on she nearly slipped and de Busne helped her down the three steps leading to the courtyard. With their faces pressed against the bars of their cells the prisoners watched, in the feeble light of the yard lamp, the Queen of France go by with her hand on the arm of her last bodyguard.

She had been able to obtain two candles, a sheet of paper, a pen and ink. While de Busne dozed in the corner of the cell, she sat down at her little white-wood table.

"It is to you, my sister, that I write for the last time. I have just been condemned, not to a shameful death, for it is shameful only for criminals, but to rejoin your brother. Like him innocent, I hope to display the same firmness as he did in his last moments. I am calm, as one is when one's conscience holds no reproach. I regret deeply having to abandon my poor children. You know that I lived only for them and for you, my good and kind sister. In what a situation do I leave you, who from your affection sacrificed everything to be with us. I learned from the pleadings at the trial that my daughter was separated from you. Alas! poor child, I dare not write to her, she would not receive it. I do not know even if this will reach you. Receive my blessings on them both. I hope that one day, when they are older, they will be able to join you again and profit to the full from your tender care and that they both remember what I have always tried to instil in them: that the principles and the execution of their duty should be the chief foundation of their life, that their affection and mutual trust will make them

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

daughter remember that in view of her age she should always help her brother with the advice that her greater experience and her affection may suggest, and let them both remember that in whatever situation they may find themselves they will never be truly happy unless united. Let them learn from our example how much consolation our affection brought us in the midst of our unhappiness and how happiness is doubled when one can share it with a friend—and where can one find a more loving and truer friend than in one's own family? Let my son never forget his father's last words, which I distinctly repeat to him, never to try to avenge our death. I have to mention something which pains my heart. I know how much distress this child must have given you. Forgive him, my dear sister, remember his age and how easy it is to make a child say anything you want, even something he does not understand. The day will come, I hope, when he will be all the more conscious of the worth of your goodness and tenderness towards them both. I now have only to confide in you my last thoughts. I would have liked to write them at the beginning of the trial, but apart from the fact that I was not allowed to write, everything went so quickly that I really would not have had the time.

"I die in the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion, in the religion of my father, in which I was brought up and which I have always professed, having no expectation of spiritual consolation, and not even knowing if there still exist any priests of that religion here, and in any case the place where I am would expose them to too much danger if they should enter. I sincerely beg pardon of God for all the faults I have committed during my life. I hope that in His goodness He will receive my last wishes, and those I have long since made, that He may receive my soul in His mercy and goodness. I ask pardon for all those I know, and of you my sister in particular, for all the distress I may, without wishing it, have caused them. I forgive all my enemies the harm they have done me. I say farewell here to my aunts and to all my brothers and sisters. I had friends.

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

troubles forms one of my greatest regrets in dying. Let them know, at least, that up to my last moment I was thinking of them.

"Farewell, my good and loving sister. May this letter reach you! Think of me always. I embrace you with all my heart, together with those poor, dear children. My God! what agony it is to leave them for ever! Farewell! Farewell! I shall henceforth pay attention to nothing but my spiritual duties. As I am not free, they will perhaps bring me a [conformist] priest, but I protest here that I shall not say a word to him and that I shall treat him as a complete stranger."

At five o'clock the call to arms was sounded in Paris and cannons were placed "in strategic positions." At seven o'clock all the troops were mustered and patrols were scouring the streets. Day was just breaking when Rosalie, the serving girl assigned to Marie Antoinette, entered the condemned woman's cell.

A young officer of the gendarmes was standing in the left-hand corner of the room. It was no longer de Busne. He had just been arrested, on the denunciation of one of his men, who had seen him give the Queen a glass of water.

Marie Antoinette had not undressed. Still wearing her black dress, she was stretched out on her bed. She wept quietly, facing the window, with her head resting on her hand.

"Madame," said Rosalie in a trembling voice, "you ate nothing yesterday evening and hardly anything all day. What would you like this morning?"

"My child, I need nothing. Everything is over for me. Come back at eight to help me dress."

She remained lying down for an hour, letting her mind wander among her memories. A pale light filtered through the barred windows. She watched her last day dawn.

Gradually the condemned woman pulled herself together, and when Rosalie returned trembling to the cell Marie Antoinette asked her to help in changing her dress.



## QUEEN OF FRANCE

The unhappy woman laid her clean chemise out on the bed, slipped into the little passage between the camp bed and the wall and let fall her black dress. At a gesture from the Queen the young servant came and stood in front of her, but the officer of the gendarmerie came forward, leaned over the bolster and watched.

"In the name of decency, Monsieur, allow me to change my linen without witnesses."

"I could not permit it," the man replied shortly. "My orders are that I must keep an eye on all your movements."

The Queen sighed, and "with all the precautions and modesty possible" took off her chemise. Over the clean one she put on the white *négligée* she usually wore in the morning. She then took a large muslin fichu, which she folded high under her chin, and put on a white bonnet without a mourning veil.

Without daring to say goodbye, Rosalie left her and the dreadful waiting began. The Abbé Girard, a conforming priest sent by the Tribunal, offered her "the services of his ministry." She refused.

"But Madame, what will be said when it is known that you refused the help of religion in these final moments?"

"You will tell those who speak of it to you that God's mercy provided for it."

The priest asked timidly: "May I accompany you, Madame?"

"If you wish."

At the same hour conspirators were going towards the Rue Saint-Honoré, along which the condemned woman was to pass. As they went to their posts they were full of hope. They would shortly number 500 and they would rush at the cart.

Who were these last defenders of Marie Antoinette, who were to lose their lives in trying to save that of the Queen? At the head of the conspiracy was a former working-woman, who had lost her sight making lace—a hunchback from Auvergne, called Catherine Urgon, wife of Fournier. Her staff was com-

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

barbers: Guillaume Lemille and Jean-Baptiste Basset. The latter, who was eighteen-and-a-half years old, had managed by himself to win over 460 men. Their rallying-sign was a little round card bearing a heart in its centre, with all round the words "Long live Louis XVII, King of France."

Their main "forces" had been recruited from among the Volunteers barracked at Vanves and Courbevoie. There was talk of 1,500 men. At the beginning of the month they had wanted to storm the Conciergerie.

"We must act at once," cried one of the barbers. "Otherwise this unhappy woman will perish!"

Their arms consisted of 1,500 pistols. Their plan was ingenious, and came from young Basset. In the daytime they would light all the street lamps in the quarter so that, for lack of oil, they would go out during the night. Under cover of the darkness there would then have been a mass attack on the Conciergerie.

But six police spies got wind of the plan. Posing as ardent royalists, they managed to gain the barbers' confidence and have the attack on the prison postponed and held back for so long that the trial had already begun.

The hunchback then exhibited "a terrible despair." "There is not a moment to be lost in saving the poor Queen. It is absolutely essential that orders should be given to rally and kidnap the condemned woman on the way."

And the order was given to the conspirators to go to the Rue Saint-Honoré.

At the same time Hermann entered the cell with the judges Foucauld and Douzé-Verteuil. Fabricius, the clerk, followed them, holding a large sheet of paper. The condemned woman, who was kneeling by her bed, praying, rose.

"Pay attention," declared Hermann. "Your sentence will be read to you."

Contrary to custom the four men dressed in black took off their hats. They seemed "struck" by the majestic air of the condemned woman who raised her head and looked at them with a

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

"No matter," declared one of the judges. "It must be read to you a second time."

And the words as sharp as knives sounded in the low vaulted cell: "... complied with ... condemned ... declares ... orders ... executed ..."

The clerk had just uttered the word "Republic," which ended the decree, when, followed by Nappier, the usher to the Tribunal, a young man entered—the executioner.

He was Henrie Sanson, son of the executioner who had guillotined Louis XVI and who since 21 January no longer exercised his duties. He came forward, seeming to fill the cell with his "enormous size."

"Hold out your hands."

The Queen recoiled two steps and asked in a frightened voice: "Are my hands to be bound?"

The executioner bowed his head. She exclaimed: "Louis XVI's hands were not bound!"

Sanson turned towards Hermann, who ordered: "Do your duty."

"At these words," Larivière, one of the turnkeys, recounted, "Henrie brutally seized the poor Queen's hands and bound them too tightly behind her back. I saw that the Princess sighed, raising her eyes to heaven, but she held back her tears, which were ready to flow."

Then Sanson, who towered over Marie Antoinette, suddenly took off the bonnet she had arranged so carefully a short while before, and with a large pair of scissors cut off the wonderful hair which had gone white, but in which ash-blond lights could still be seen.

The Queen thought she was to be executed there with an axe and she turned round, her eyes terrified. With his large hands the executioner replaced the bonnet on the top of the Queen's head.

It was nearly eleven o'clock.

The bystanders moved away from the door. In silence Marie

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

a double row of gendarmes, she reached the office and suddenly her eyes filled with horror. Beyond the rails of the little courtyard, beyond the two doors which had just been opened, she had caught sight of the ignominious cart. Louis XVI had gone to death in a coach.

The picture of the Archduchess, the features of that "charming and dangerous favourite of an old monarchy" become blurred and are effaced. Everything disappears—and should disappear—leaving to posterity only the picture of a woman in a white dress, walking to the guillotine like a true Queen of France.

The temperature was a little warmer—45 degrees at eleven o'clock. The weather was fine; a light mist, that indefinable Paris mist, blurred the horizon. In the Cour de Mai gendarmes on foot and on horseback, together with pikemen, surrounded the muddy cart.

The white figure, which seemed to be held in leash by the executioner, appeared under the arcade, took a few steps and stopped by the cart. A small ladder of four or five steps had been placed there. The executioner showed the Queen where to put her foot and supported her with his hand while, holding her head high, she mounted the tail-board. A narrow, uneven plank was fixed more or less securely to the sides, cutting the cart in two. She was about to step over it and sit down facing the two cart-horses, who were harnessed in tandem to the shafts. But the executioner and his assistant stopped her; she was to sit facing backwards.

The Abbé Girard climbed the ladder in his turn and sat down on the right of the condemned woman. Behind them, leaning on the rails, stood the executioner, holding the rope in one hand and his three-cornered hat in the other. His assistant, also bare-headed, was at the back.

It was a quarter-past eleven.

The cart set off noisily. The actor Grammont, on horseback and carrying a sword, preceded it; the gendarmes surrounded it; the pikemen followed.

## QUEEN OF FRANCE

The great gateway opened. The crowd was silent. Without a murmur or an insult they watched the passing of the woman whom they had acclaimed twenty years before. Marie Antoinette appeared unmoved and seemed to see nothing with her motionless bloodshot eyes.

Thirty thousand troops were lined along the route. Cries of "Make way for the Austrian!" and "Long live the Republic!" broke out, but Marie Antoinette did not seem to hear. Her eyes rested unmoved on the narrow fronts of the houses, where tri-colour flags and revolutionary signs waved.

The Rue Saint-Honoré seemed endless. Did she perceive, at the corner of the street, a group of "honest folk," simply dressed? They were the defeated barbers. They numbered barely eighty. The spies had acted. The police had done their work and "infiltrated" the movement. In vain did the little boot-black cry out in despair: "We must go to the big merchants, who want nothing better than to snatch her from the executioners!"

The cart had gone by.

They remained there, deserted, haggard, waiting for the police to pick them up.

Noon struck.

Since eight in the morning the Place de la Révolution had been filling up. It was now black with people.

When the cart was seen coming from the former Rue Royale, the applause broke out and cries of "Long live the Republic!" were heard.

The cart rattled over the uneven ground of the square. The Queen was still impassive. "The slut was audacious and insolent to the end," Hébert was to remark. She turned her head, saw the Tuileries on her right, changed colour and "became much paler." With a few more turns of the wheels the cart arrived at the place of execution. The cries and applause grew louder, and hats flew in the air. The Queen was still looking to her right. Through the great alley she could now see the façade

## ANDRÉ CASTELOT

entry, the crowd packed in the Place Louis-XV applauded just as today, and the men threw their hats in the air, when Marie Antoinette and her husband appeared on the terrace.

The cart stopped. Rapidly and without accepting any help, Marie Antoinette got down, turned round and saw the two raised arms holding the heavy triangle of steel. She hurried, climbed the steep ladder with such precipitation, "in bravado" one witness wrote, that she lost one of her little shoes. On reaching the platform she trod on the executioner's foot.

"Monsieur, I ask your pardon. I did not do it on purpose."

These were her last words.

Marie Antoinette looked at the vast square around her. The assistants came forward. With a movement she let fall the bonnet from her head. She shut her eyes and felt that she was being dragged to the upright plank. She was tied on. It took long—horribly long. Finally the plank tipped over and she felt the heavy wooden collar fixed round her bared neck.

A click.

It was a quarter-past twelve.

Between the moment she appeared on the platform and the moment the crowd heard the dull noise four minutes had passed. One of the assistants picked up the head dripping with blood, held it up by the white hair and, to applause, carried it round the scaffold.

Suddenly the gendarmes in the front rank were seen to rush forward and arrest a man who had come out from beneath the scaffold. While he was being taken to the Tuileries section the crowd parted to make way for the cart streaming with blood. Its path could be traced to the Madeleine cemetery. There the executioners noticed that no coffin or grave had been prepared. Anxious to get their dinners, they threw the body on the grass, the head between the legs.

The mist had quite cleared away, but the wind rose and from the north there came heavy clouds which gradually covered the whole sky.

# Death in the South Atlantic

MICHAEL POWELL



AN ABRIDGEMENT

## The Author

MICHAEL POWELL was born in Canterbury, Kent and educated at Kings School, Canterbury. He began his working career as a banker, but in 1925 left to pursue a more consuming interest—films. His first job was mopping Alice Terry's imprints off the floor after she had walked across it. From such a humble start, he rose to become one of England's most interesting and original directors and the producer of such highly praised films as "One of Our Aircraft is Missing," "The Red Shoes," and "The Battle of the River Plate," the last providing the background and research for "Death in the South Atlantic."

DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

—Michael Powell

Published by Rinehart & Company, Inc.

Copyright 1956, 1957 by Michael Powell



# I

## The Tiger of the Sea

AT HALF-PAST ten in the morning off the coast of Portuguese East Africa, Captain Patrick Dove, Master of the Tanker *Africa Shell*, 706 tons, received a violent shock. The steamy East African atmosphere, the rain, the squalls, and the choppy sea which was running in the Mozambique Channel, made for bad visibility, but still, standing on his bridge and looking out to sea, he could see, clearly defined against a dull background of rain-clouds, a big battleship, coming directly for the *Africa Shell* at full speed, throwing up a great bow-wave of white foam.

First Officer Mansfield stood beside Dove on the bridge, his thumb pressed on the button of the alarm gong which was ringing all over the ship. A native boy stood at the wheel. He held the course steady although his eyes rolled anxiously to port. The *Africa Shell* was brand-new for use on the coastal trade. Although the world was at war, she had never expected to get into action so soon. She hadn't even a gun. The crew could be heard jumping to emergency stations, whilst the officers came running aft along the cat-walks. They reached the bridge more or less together and out of breath.

Dove lowered his glasses and said, in a conversational tone: "One of those German Pocket battleships is coming straight at us." The others grinned, and Chief Engineer Low said, "Got a mosquito in your glasses, Skipper?" "Some mosquito," replied Dove, "and some sting! Take a look." He handed his glasses to the Chief. Second Officer Jeffcoat grabbed the spare pair from the bridge; First Officer Mansfield had his own. All three pairs of glasses were pointed towards the east. By now the huge battle-cruiser was much closer. Her square control-tower was unmistakable and her compact shape and high speed gave her an air of extraordinary menace as she came rushing towards them.

The Chief was the first to speak. "By Gum, Skipper, you're

## MICHAEL POWELL

"It's a battleship right enough," said Mansfield. He added hopefully. "It might be a Frenchman. She's coming from Madagascar."

Dove grunted sceptically and said, "How far off would you say she was?"

"Seven or eight miles," estimated Jeffcoat.

Captain Dove turned and looked at the long, low coastline, which lay about six miles away. "Once we get inside the three mile limit, I don't mind if the whole German Navy comes after us," he said. Suddenly he leapt into action. "Turn for the shore, Mr. Jeffcoat! . . . Whack her up, Chief! Get the boats slung out, Mr. Mansfield! Put a man for'ard to watch out for shoals. I am going in close."

The Chief hurried below, the others jumped into action. Very soon the little ship, going at a speed never intended by her makers, was heading straight for the shore. Dove stood with his back to it, facing his pursuer.

He looked through his glasses at the approaching ship. "She's signalling!"

Mr. Mansfield joined his Captain and both of them looked through their glasses, spelling out together "International Code! 'Heave—to—I—am—going—to—board—you!'"

Dove growled, "Ruddy pirate! What's our position now?"

Jeffcoat answered from the wheelhouse, "Another half mile will do us."

Dove said to Mansfield, "Hoist the Acknowledge. Tell the boy to take his time. You go with him and fumble the hoist."

Jeffcoat yelled, "They're signalling again, sir."

The two officers raised their glasses and again read out, "Forbid—use—of—radio."

By now nobody needed any glasses to see that their pursuer was a Pocket battleship. She was only a mile away and coming up fast. Suddenly there was an orange flash and a puff of smoke. One of her forward guns had fired! A few seconds later a five-inch shell passed over their heads. A fountain of sand and water

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

went up in the air ahead of the ship. The steersman rolled his eyes at Dove, but held his course. The others looked open-mouthed at Dove for orders.

He roared, "Hoist—hoist! What are you waiting for? Do you want your blooming heads shot off? What's our position now, Mister?"

"Just checking, sir," came the reply from the chart-house, whilst Mansfield shouted, "She's signalling again, sir."

Dove raised his glasses and grunted, "'Heave to or I sink you! Well, Mr. Jeffcoat?"

"We've done it," yelled Jeffcoat, bursting out of the chart-house, "we're inside the three mile limit, we're only two and a half miles off the beach!"

Dove leapt to the Engine Room telegraph, and rang to Slow. The noise and vibration stopped. Dove looked again at their pursuer.

"You can come aboard now, my lad!" he said. Then down the voice-pipe he reported, "We made it, Chief. Come up on deck."

"She may still be a Frenchman," said Mansfield, "just wants to check on us."

"That shell didn't hum the Marseillaise for me," said Dove. He looked again through his glasses and said, with scorn, "French, my rear end! That's the Nazi flag! Mister! Stand by to receive visitors. Keep edging in towards the beach. You take charge, I've got to get the ship's papers from my cabin."

He half jumped, half fell, down the steep ladder, burst into his sea-cabin, opened the safe and took out a bag which was already weighted. He hurried out on deck, dropped it overboard and watched it sink.

By now the *Africa Shell*, with her engines almost stopped, was rolling heavily in the swell. The Pocket battleship, thirty times their size, was only half a mile away. When Dove returned to the bridge, they had swung out an electric crane aft and lowered a launch into the water. It was a powerful affair, loaded with men, and was heading swiftly towards them. It was a boarding-

## MICHAEL POWELL

party. Quite suddenly, the cold reality of his situation struck Patrick Dove. Simultaneously he and Mr. Jeffcoat lowered their glasses and looked at each other.

"They don't look as if they came from Sunday School," said Dove.

Jeffcoat nodded. "Tough looking lot."

The big launch had come alongside. On deck was swarming Jeffcoat's "tough looking lot": two officers and twelve seamen, dressed in every conceivable rig. One, a special one, wore clean white trousers and a leather jacket. He was the first to come aboard. All had guns in their hands and knives in their belts, and carried the Swastika displayed somewhere on their person. It was a real pirate crew. They came on board like pirates. A special party carried explosives and detonators. Mr. Mansfield watched them grimly. Leather-jacket, fumbling with his gun, addressed him in good English. "Where is your Captain?"

Mansfield jerked a thumb. "On the bridge."

"Show me the radio-cabin!"

"There isn't one."

Leather-jacket waved his gun. "Take me there at once! You are forbidden to send out signals. You are forbidden to communicate with any shore station. I hold you personally responsible to see that no signals are sent about the boarding of your ship."

Mansfield stepped up close to him, "See here, Mister. Are you an officer of that ship over there?"

"Gestapo," was the reply.

During this encounter, the rest of the boarding-party had gone about their business. They knew exactly what to do. They had obviously done it many times before. Voices shouting in German could be heard all over the ship.

The Naval Lieutenant had gone straight to the bridge. As his head appeared at the top of the companion-ladder, Dove said, "Hallo, Hertzberg! Got a new job?"

For a moment, Lieutenant Hertzberg was taken aback.

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

he grinned and stepped forward. He was a smart, amiable officer. "Dove! Bully Dove! Fancy meeting you. Bit of a change, this, from the Hamburg-Amerika Line, eh?" Then he became official. "I'm very sorry, Captain. We are going to sink your ship."

"I'm blown if you are," said Dove violently, "look here, Hertzberg, take a look at this chart. Take a bearing of those lighthouses. We're in Portuguese waters, well inside the three mile limit."

His violence was parried with a smile. "I don't admit that. Your chart is inaccurate. You have ten minutes to get your crew." His tone changed to a more friendly one for a moment, "And for Auld Lang Syne, Dove, you and your officers can go too." He pointed over to the shore. "You won't have far to pull."

"Rather less than three miles," said Dove, looking him squarely in the eye.

"I make it rather more," replied Hertzberg coolly. "Please take me to your cabin. I must have the Log."

As Dove and Hertzberg went down to the cabin, the Chief passed them carrying a suitcase. "Hurry up, Skipper!" he panted, "they've opened the sea-cocks and set time-bombs alongside the fuel-tanks."

Some of the boats were already being lowered away. The boarding-party, their work of destruction finished, were hurrying to and from their launch, their arms full of loot: typewriters, cigarettes, bottles, radio-sets, instruments and cans of food.

"Pirates! That's what you are. Bloody pirates!" growled Dove.

Leather-jacket appeared in the doorway. He said, with a jerk of his head towards Dove: "Where do you keep your code?"

"International Code?" said Dove, wilfully misunderstanding, "on the bridge of course."

"Your secret code," said the Gestapo man angrily.

Dove jerked his thumb over the side. "In Davy Jones's Locker."

Hertzberg had meanwhile been scribbling a receipt. He straightened up formally. "Here is your receipt, Captain Dove.

## MICHAEL POWELL

On the Pocket battleship a signal-lamp was winking from the flag-deck. A German sailor came running to Hertzberg and reported in German. By now all the boats were lowered. The boarding-party was back in the launch.

On receiving the sailor's report, Hertzberg abruptly left the cabin followed by Dove. As they went down the ladders, he said, "Sorry, Dove, change of plan. You will have to come with us." He called out to the boats, which were rising and falling on the swell, "Pull away there! We are going to sink this ship immediately." Mansfield called out to Dove from the stern of his boat, but Hertzberg answered him, "Your Captain is going with us!" He said something in German to the Gestapo man. When Dove protested, the Officer replied, "My Captain has recalled us. We have sighted another ship, which requires our attention. Come!"

"I protest," said Dove sturdily, but obeying the order.

"You can protest to Captain Langsdorff," was the only answer he got.

By now the launch was approaching her stern and the colossal steel side of the raider rose thirty feet above them. The big crane was swung out and the hook was already coming down to meet them, as the coxswain brought the launch alongside. The tackles were ready in the boat, and were hooked on smartly. No orders were given. Everything was done to the bosun's pipe where, high above their heads, Dove could see faces looking down at him. They were mostly young faces, some of them absurdly young, mere boys of sixteen or seventeen years of age.

Dove was expecting to have to climb a rope-ladder, but to his surprise the whole launch, with all the men in it, was lifted cleanly and smoothly out of the water and up into the air. A few seconds later, swinging amidships, the launch was lowered smoothly into an open hangar.

Already the engines were turning at half-speed and suddenly a loudspeaker started blaring orders in German. The launch

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

settled in the chocks on the floor of the hangar with a clunk! An eerie rumbling noise started above their heads and Dove, looking up, was startled to see a huge steel roof rolling over, to close the whole hangar. For a few seconds they were in complete darkness, then harsh lights came on and the crew started to scramble out of the boat followed by Dove and Hertzberg. He was a prisoner on board the raider.

As Dove was marched for'ard by Hertzberg, the battleship was already moving at full speed. They arrived at the door of a cabin near the control-tower. Hertzberg knocked and went straight in, followed by Dove. A man in Captain's uniform was sitting at a desk, covered with papers. Hertzberg advanced and gave him a short report in German. Dove's eye was caught by a large framed photograph of a battle cruiser on the bulkhead. He stepped up and had a close look at it. It was inscribed in French, "To the *Graf Spee* from the French cruiser *Jeanne d'Arc*."

There was a muffled explosion not far away. Dove turned quickly round from the photograph. The two officers exchanged a look. The Captain said politely, "I am afraid, Captain, that that was your ship." He dismissed Hertzberg with a nod.

Dove grunted, and mumbled something about adjectival pirates, then pointing to the photograph, he said, "So, you are the Pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee*." The German smiled. Without replying directly he pointed to a chair and said, "Please sit down."

Dove ignored the invitation and said, "Captain Langsdorff! I wish to make a protest!"

He was interrupted. "My name is Kay. I hold the rank of Captain, but I am not the Captain of this ship."

Dove said bluntly, "I want to see Captain Langsdorff."

"Your request will be forwarded to him," replied Kay blandly. "Captain Langsdorff seldom leaves the bridge."

The alarm buzzer started to ring. All over the ship the loudspeaker system came alive. Orders and numbers were shouted. Heavy boots hurried along steel decks and up steel

## MICHAEL POWELL

ladders. Kay pressed a bell on his desk. The door opened and a Master-at-Arms stepped in. He gave the Nazi salute.

Kay rose and said in German, "Escort the English Captain to his cabin." The interview was over. Dove rose, paused a moment, shrugged his shoulders and walked out. The Master-at-Arms followed and closed the door.

The loudspeakers continued to blare orders. The place was alive with hurrying sailors. Dove and his escort went down a steel ladder and across a big flat, then down a ladder along a corridor and down yet another ladder.

They were now below the water-line. There was no port-hole, of course. A blue light was burning. The cabin was very small and plain—and noisy. An air conditioning fan whirled in a corner of the room. The Master-at-Arms announced, "You stay. I go now." He went.

Dove grunted, "You stay! . . . as if I could ruddy well do anything else." He stretched out, on the bunk, his hands behind his head.

An hour passed, then the lock clicked and the door opened. The Master-at-Arms came in. He said slowly to Dove, "Kapitan, you now have exercise on deck."

Dove said stubbornly, "I want to see Captain Langsdorff."

Once more his request was blocked by the answer, "Maybe he see you. Maybe not."

When Dove came on deck, there was no sign of any other ship in sight. It was a fair day. Their course, as far as he could judge it, was now sou'-sou'-west.

There seemed to be no restrictions on what he could see, or not see. The Master-at-Arms didn't hurry him along when he stopped to admire the great eleven-inch guns in their heavy armour-plated turrets; when he counted the turrets of five-nines and all other secondary armament with which the battleship was bristling. He stopped again to look up at the massive control-tower, quite unlike anything else he had ever seen on any other ship. A thing that puzzled him greatly, high up above the control tower, was a small, dark, cylindrical object, like a



## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

the main mast, which ceaselessly turned round and round, as if searching the seas. Dove had never seen such a thing—nor had many other men at that time. Ahead in this, as in many other things, the Pocket battleship was equipped with a rudimentary form of radar.

A messenger came up and spoke to the Master-at-Arms, who said to Dove, "Our Kapitan wishes to see you," and turned to lead the way.

The Captain's cabin was on the deck level, and was very large and modern. Captain Langsdorff, himself, was a tall slender man of about forty. That was all Dove could see at first glance, for he was turned away from his visitor, and bent over a very large chart of the South Atlantic Ocean. He had obviously just come from the bridge.

The chart was large and an interesting one. It was divided into dozens of squares, about thirty miles each way. All of them were within a certain latitude and longitude. Each square had a date on it. The course of the *Graf Spee* was boldly drawn upon the chart from the moment of sailing from Hamburg to their present position. It crossed and recrossed itself several times off the west coast of Africa. It was in this area that the *Graf Spee* had been lying in wait before she started to sink British ships. Each action had been marked on the chart and neat little counters, with the name of the sunken ship printed on them, showed the extent of Captain Langsdorff's bag to date.

The Master-at-Arms had opened the door without a knock, and come in followed by Dove. After announcing "Der Englische Kapitan Dove, Herr Kapitan," the Petty Officer had stepped outside and shut the door, leaving Dove alone with his captor.

After a moment, Captain Langsdorff straightened up and turned around. He had a sensitive, strong face with eyes full of intelligence and imagination. He wore an elegant little piratical beard on the point of his chin. He carried himself lightly and well.

## MICHAEL POWELL

indignation and sense of grievance returned. He glowered. Captain Langsdorff was the first to speak, "Well, Captain Dove," he said.

"Well, Captain Langsdorff," growled Dove, giving not an inch.

There was a second's pause as each man sized up the other. Then Langsdorff broke into a charming smile, and advancing quickly, held out his hand. Dove had to shake it. Langsdorff continued to speak, in an English which was almost without accent. "How do you do, Captain? My boarding officer has reported your protest, over the seizure of your ship. You say that you were in territorial waters. If you were, that's going to be very difficult for me."

Dove was sensible to his opponent's charm but stuck to his point, "Not half so difficult, sir, as it has been for me already. I've lost my ship and everything in it. To my mind, there wasn't the slightest doubt that I was well inside the three mile limit."

Langsdorff appeared to give due consideration to Dove's complaint, but his eyes were twinkling, and Dove soon caught the twinkle. Langsdorff smiled and said, "Captain, we are not likely to agree. Shall we compromise? You make your protest in writing, and I myself will sign it. Is that fair?"

Dove saw that that was all that he would get, and thinking of compensation after the war, he took it and said, "Fair enough, sir."

Langsdorff said gaily, "Then we'll drink to that. Have some Scotch?" He crossed to the other side of the cabin.

"Believe me, Captain," he continued as he handed Dove his drink. "I don't like sending ships to the bottom. No sailor does. Nor do I like making war on civilians. Up to now it is the civilians who have suffered in this war. The soldiers are sitting in concrete and armour broadcasting to each other. The air-men are flying reconnaissance flights. As for the sailors, they're—well, look at me! I have command of a fine ship, a new

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

ship, one of the finest battleships afloat. My orders are to sink merchant ships and to avoid a battle."

"You never know your luck," said Dove comfortingly, "it might happen that without you expecting it, you'll run up against one of ours."

Langsdorff picked up a cigar and lit it. "You have only three ships who can match my guns—your *Repulse*, *Renown* and *Hood*," he commented. "And those big battleships are not fast enough to catch me."

"Plenty of our cruisers are faster than you," said his remorseless guest.

Langsdorff seemed to be enjoying the match of wits. "Your fast cruisers are no match for my eleven-inch guns," he said, "And I have one more advantage, Captain, it's very difficult to find me."

"I appreciate that, sir," said Dove, "I don't understand how your supply ship can ever hope to find you."

"She can't," said this modern pirate, and he looked as pleased as a boy as he added, "I find her."

Langsdorff led the way over to the big chart-table, which Dove had been looking at out of the corner of his eye ever since he came into the room. They both leant over it. Langsdorff said, "It's the simplest thing in the world. The details are secret but the system is old. The ocean is divided into squares, and I know exactly in which square I can find my supply ship on given dates."

Dove bent over the chart and committed as much as he could to memory, commenting that it was all very interesting. He looked up to see Langsdorff eyeing him with amusement. "I know exactly what you are thinking, Captain," he said, "but this chart is safe . . . and so are you! for the duration. . . ."

He straightened up and, looking down at the chart, as an eagle looks down upon its hunting ground, he said, "So you see, I have the Seven Seas to hunt in, from the North Pole right down to the South!"

## MICHAEL POWELL

Dove said drily, "I hope you won't go as far as that, sir. I'm not dressed for it."

This strange man suddenly reached out and clapped him on the shoulder, and said with great friendliness, almost affectionately, "Our tailor will fix you up with something. I will order it myself." Then he turned just as quickly and went to the door, opened it and called "Lempkel!" The voice of the Master-at-Arms answered at once. Captain Langsdorff said, in English for Dove's benefit, "Escort Captain Dove to his cabin." The interview was at an end.

But the curious thing was that both men, although officially enemies, felt that they had made a friend.

"Wunderbar!" said the little fat tailor.

Dove was examining himself in the long glass. His new suit of thick blue serge was really an excellent fit. Suddenly he cocked his head, "Hallo. We're slowing down. What's up?" he said.

At that moment the Master-at-Arms came in. "Kapitan Langsdorff is asking for you, Captain Dove," he said.

The first thing that Dove saw, when he came into the open air, was a big black tanker flying the Norwegian flag, only a few cables length away. She was equipped for refuelling at sea, and half a dozen big fuel pipes were swung high on derricks; her decks were swarming with men, and Dove's keen eyes could pick out parties opening crates and bringing up stores from the holds, while others were mustering for'ard and aft rigging hoists for trans-shipping between ship and ship. This was evidently the supply-ship. As Dove watched, the two ships came closer and closer. His eye was caught by the Norwegian flag being struck. Another flag was run up and broken out. It was the Nazi flag, and was greeted with cheers and yells of welcome from the crew of the battleship.

They were very far south. How far Dove never quite discovered. The sky was grey and the sea was green and icy. They might have been off Kerguelan or Pitcairn.

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

By now the two big ships were only about a hundred feet apart and Dove admired the seamanship of both Captains. The sea roared between them. Suddenly there was a bang as a brass gun on the tanker fired a slug, attached to a line, over to the battleship. There was a chorus of yells as the young sailors dashed from cover to be the first to grab the line and run away with it. For'ard and aft other lines were coming over, and in a very short time the hoists were rigged and the great fuel pipes came weaving and bobbing down towards the battleship.

It was all far too efficient and well organised for Dove. "Nice goings-on," he said aloud to the Master-at-Arms, "you'd think the South Atlantic belonged to you fellows!"

A voice high above him, on the topmost bridge, called: "Good morning!" Captain Langsdorff had spotted him and was leaning over. He looked relaxed and cheerful. He had been in the habit of sending for Dove every two or three days during the fortnight of captivity. They had got to know each other well, and their appreciation of each other had increased. Dove had the impression that Langsdorff sent for him because it did the Captain good to talk to somebody with whom he could relax the authority and responsibility of his position. Langsdorff was a passionate patriot and he felt that the prestige and naval glory of Germany depended upon him carrying out his mission successfully and bringing his ship in triumph back to port, against the might of the combined Navies who were looking for him. This determination, coupled with his other determination not to lose one civilian life if he could help it, and with his keen sense of sole responsibility for the lives of his own crew, made a heavy burden for a sensitive, imaginative man of high principles, unsupported, and belonging to a Navy which had so short a tradition of sea-service behind it.

But now he looked cheerful and confident as he shouted, in answer to Dove's thanks for letting him come on deck, "I thought you might be interested!"

Dove looked around at the tanker, the oil pipes, the crates of

ADVENTURE  
READER'S SERVICE  
Speech Board of Foreign Missions

## MICHAEL POWELL

on Langsdorff, "You're right! I am!" He was standing near one of the hoists and as a big sack came zooming across the gap it burst and dried fruit showered all over the gun deck. It was treated as a great joke. The Petty Officers looked on smiling as the young sailors scrambled for the raisins and prunes.

One of the boys offered a handful to Dove. He hesitated and looked up to the bridge where he had last seen Langsdorff. But a voice said at his elbow, "Go on, take it!" Langsdorff had come down from the bridge, the inevitable cigar between his teeth, and standing there in his blue uniform, his cigar and his cap cocked at a rakish angle, his little black beard trim in the pale light, he looked more like a romantic pirate than ever.

Presently he slung the loop of his glasses over his head and handed them to Dove. Dove took them with eagerness. He had been intrigued by the fact that the tanker had no visible name, but now as he scanned her side through the powerful glasses, he realised that she had a name amidships which had been painted out. But to a keen eye the letters were just visible. Dove adjusted the glasses and looked again and read aloud: *ALTMARK*—

This was long before the name of the ill-famed prison ship became known, but there was something ominous to Dove, even then, in the name lurking under its coat of black paint.

When he heard Dove speak, Langsdorff gave a quick look and took the binoculars back. He looked at the *Altmark's* name himself and frowned, then shrugged his shoulders and said carelessly, "Not very well camouflaged, is it? Now we do things much better." He pointed down on to the deck where some men were painting a long strip of sheet metal, about fifteen feet long and one foot wide. The name they were painting on it was *Deutschland*. At a shout from the Captain the officer in charge of the party gave an order, and the sheet was turned over to show *Admiral Scheer* painted on the other side. Langsdorff explained, "Those are two of our aliases. We rig them up for neutrals, sometimes one side, sometimes the other. Some-

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

times we even use our own name. Neutrals always report what they see and so—I keep your Navy guessing. . . .”

He gave a mischievous look at Dove's solemn face and said, “I am like a pretty girl. I change my hat—I change my frock—Presto!—I am a different girl!”

There was a nervous quality in his gaiety and in his stream of talk. Dove felt the temporary relief from constant strain. Langsdorff continued to chat in the same manner as they strolled about the deck. “That working party are putting up a new funnel . . . a dummy funnel—made of canvas . . . those fellows are rigging an extra turret—made of wood. I am changing my silhouette. We are very good at that. And talking of new silhouettes, I must congratulate you,” he added, looking Dove up and down.

“Thanks,” said Dove, “he's done a good bit of camouflage too—around the waistline!”

Langsdorff laughed, “I want you to look your best, Captain. You will have company to-night. I am transferring to this ship all the officer prisoners who are in the *Altmark*.”

This was big news, indeed. Dove said, “I gather it's been your practice, sir, to transfer to the *Altmark*, as a prison ship, all the officers and crews which you have captured?”

Langsdorff nodded and Dove went on, “May I ask why you are changing this practice?” Langsdorff answered briskly, “Certainly, Captain. I have no secrets from you.” His friendly smile belied the irony in his words. “The *Graf Spee* is going to be relieved by—another vessel. We have done our spell of duty.” Suddenly he showed the deep emotion which lay beneath his gay manner, and it was with deep feeling that he went on, “Three months at sea! We are due for leave at home. And when I return, I must bring back my officer prisoners. Good for civilian morale. The *Altmark* will return at her leisure with the ships' crews under hatches. So to-night you are no more alone. Now if you will excuse me, I will tell the Master-at-Arms to show you to your new quarters. Lempke!” He gave an order

## MICHAEL POWELL

The steel door of Dove's new quarters had a metal plate screwed into it, labelled "See Kadetten." The Master-at-Arms told the ship's carpenter, who accompanied them, to unscrew the plate. Dove supposed that it would be bad form to keep the sign up now that it was going to be a prison. (There were no midshipmen on the *Graf Spee*.)

It was a large room, immediately under the main deck. The portholes were boarded up and barred. There were plenty of steel chairs and several tables bolted to the floor. A pantry and a lavatory opened off the main room. The place was clean, though bare, and Dove nodded approvingly before he said, "Very nice! Very nice and spacious."

The Master-at-Arms agreed, "You will be twenty-nine officers here." Dove's smile vanished. "Twenty-nine!" His guide grinned, "Ja, ja. And later on, many more!"

Young sailors burst in, carrying baggage which they dumped in the middle of the room by the steel pillars. In no time, a great pile of kitbags, suitcases, brown paper parcels, even one or two cabin trunks were dumped on the floor. Dove got more and more excited as he read the labels and saw the familiar names of home ports. He was just saying, "All I can say is they had more time to pack than I had," when there was the sound of running feet and excited voices along the deck outside, and the first batch of prisoners burst into the flat, heralded by a broad Yorkshire voice, "*Newton Beach* first! Come on, lads!"

His companion shouted, "Quick! Get one of the corners!"

Ignoring Dove's outstretched hand, they charged across the flat and took possession. They were only just ahead of the others. Nobody had any time for Dove. As each grabbed his position, he announced his ship and hailed his own people to come over and join him. Others were claiming their baggage from the mound in the centre of the room. There was a pandemonium of voices, a scraping and banging of cases, calls of "*Huntsman, Huntsman . . .*" "*Ashlea over here! . . .*" "*Newton Beach! . . .*" "*Trevanion, this is Trevanion table!*"

Finally Dove . . .



## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

who was pushing by him, and twisted him round, saying with emphasis, "Good evening, Captain!"

"Why! You're one of us," said the invader. The others gathered round exclaiming, "I thought he was a Jerry! . . . Glory be! A new face! . . . Who are you, anyway?"

"Dove, *Africa Shell*," he answered, feeling like a new boy at school.

"When was your ship sunk, Dove?" said the Captain of the *Ashlea*.

"November 15th, Indian Ocean. Who are all of you?" said Dove, looking around him.

One by one each ship announced herself through her little group of officers. "*Huntsman*! . . ." "*Newton Beach*! . . ." "*Ashlea*! . . ." "*Trevanion*! . . ." Last of all came Dove with: "*Africa Shell*!" A big map of the North and South Atlantic Ocean filled the end wall of the flat, a relic of the midshipmen's school. With a sweeping gesture he indicated the vast expanse of ocean into which they were heading, and said grimly: "Who's next?"

## II

### The Hunters

IT WOULD HAVE heartened Dove and his fellow-prisoners to know that, day and night, all over the world men were asking the very same question.

In London, the Director of Naval Intelligence was at that moment summarising the position to a remarkably varied group of people; some in uniform, some not, both men and women. Some of them made notes as the D.N.I. talked, others looked at the map on which the vast area of the *Graf Spee's* operations were marked. The D.N.I., by his tone, might have been discussing the weather instead of the chase of a hunting beast which covered half of the world. "... *Trevanion . . . Newton Beach . . . Africa Shell . . .* all merchant-ships and all sailing alone. There may be one Raider or two. Probably only one, although more than one has been reported. Their Intelligence is good. They have agents ashore, of course, and new ways of passing it on . . ."

An elderly officer in Naval uniform appeared and handed him a signal which he glanced at before going on. "... I am sending out a priority warning to all our agents, to all Naval Attachés at Embassies and Legations. What we are looking for are men who get frequent telegrams from neutral ports." He held up the signal in his hand, "Take this, for instance. This is from Stanley in Paris. The French police are being very helpful. . . ."

In Paris an hour or two later that same night, the Rome Express was about to leave. A nervous traveler, smoking a cigarette outside the sleeping-car labeled Genoa, suddenly turned and leapt up the steps into the coach. The fact that officials were already calling out "En voiture!" hardly seemed to justify the extreme haste with which he went to bed; and, if his conscience was as clear as it should be, the sight of two men hurrying through the barrier could hardly explain it as one of them was

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

set, was a well-known Inspector from the Sûreté in plain-clothes. They had a list of names in their hand and came straight to the Genoa sleeping car. A railway official followed them and, although the hands of the clock had passed the official time of departure, the train remained in the station.

In the corridor of the wagon-lit, Lorrain and Gasset knocked at the door of number 9 and 10. There was no answer, so Lorrain tried the door. It was locked. Gasset beckoned to the conductor, who opened the door with his pass-key, but the door proved to be on the chain. On the other side of the train, in the narrow steamy passage between the Express and a local train which was standing on the next track, the nervous passenger was scrambling out of the window of the sleeping car. He was in such a hurry that he dropped without looking where he was going, which was unfortunate for him, for he fell straight into the arms of a tall Englishman, who held him tight and said, politely, "My name is Stanley—er—Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

In a London Club two days later, two men, in two armchairs, were reading their newspapers side by side. One paper was *The Times*, the other was a Paris newspaper. Behind this barrier of wood pulp, Stanley and the D.N.I. were conferring in low voices. Stanley was chuckling, "His name was Evergreen. Amusing—eh? So we took him along to Gasset's office. There was nothing on him, then we saw this." He passed over his Paris paper, and the D.N.I. handed him *The Times* in exchange. He knew that Stanley liked a bit of mystification, so he merely remarked, "The racing-page, I see," and waited for Stanley to explain, which he did in due course, in an exasperating drawl. "Y—e—s. The racing-page. Old Gasset was brooding over it for a while, but the only remark he made was that he didn't understand why French breeders can't give French names to their horses. 'What names?' said I. 'Oh,' he says, 'Untsman, Newtong be-ach.' Look there, sir . . . there. Under New Arrivals."

The D.N.I. looked and murmured, "Yes. We ought to have

## MICHAEL POWELL

Stanley added, "And in each case the port of sailing is printed."

"Very neat," said the D.N.I.

"We're holding him, of course," Stanley winked. "No habeas corpus in France. Gasset has put a man to sit in his apartment."

The D.N.I. had been reading the page with attention. He said, "There are a lot of South American ports mentioned here. Ray Martin is going to be pleased about this."

Stanley yawned and said, "Time for a martini. Where is Ray Martin just now?"

The D.N.I. said, "The drinks are on me," and then, after striking the bell, "Montevideo."

In Montevideo harbour, the cruiser *Exeter* was lying alongside the quay in the brilliant morning sunshine. She was a pretty ship and beautifully kept, a light cruiser of 8,400 tons, mounting six eight-inch guns. A guard of honour was drawn up on the quarterdeck and a group of officers was at the head of the gangway to greet a distinguished visitor.

The Rolls-Royce of the British Minister glided over the tram-lines and stopped at the bottom of the gangway. The Minister got out, accompanied by Captain McCall, the British Naval Attaché at Buenos Aires. They climbed the gangway and were piped aboard with proper ceremony. Formal salutes were exchanged. Mr. Millington-Drake lifted his hat.

Mr. Eugene Millington-Drake was enormously popular in Uruguay, and was most definitely the right man in the right place. He was generous, an excellent showman, more than a little of an actor and was on good terms with Commodore Harwood. He was dressed for a formal call, in morning coat and top hat.

Commodore Henry Harwood-Harwood, a big, bluff, and burly man, looked very simple and was not. He was a good disciplinarian, a passionate patriot, a student of strategy and of Naval history. Captain "Hookie" Bell, who commanded the *Exeter*, had newly taken over command of the flagship and was

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

not yet on familiar terms with his Commodore. A popular Captain, he was the kind of fighting man that stood beside Nelson.

After the salutes, Harwood stepped forward, and he and the Minister shook hands. Then presenting the others: "Minister, may I present the new Captain of the *Exeter*? Mr. Millington-Drake—Captain Bell." The two men shook hands. Harwood turned and said, "McCall, you know Bell, don't you?"

McCall nodded and said, "Hallo, Hookie."

Below in the Admiral's cabin Ray Martin, a rather insignificant-looking man, was sitting quietly reading the newspaper. Martin glanced up, as they all came in. Harwood, who had been impatiently listening to McCall's summary of the program for the day, said, "Yes, yes. By the way, you all know Martin." They all did, and Martin nodded. Harwood went on, "Now what about this other business?"

McCall lowered his voice and said, "Well, to put it in a nutshell, the telephone line between the Ministry here and the Embassy in B.A. is tapped. Nobody but I and Martin here knew of *Exeter's* proposed arrival, but on the same day that he 'phoned me, it was known in Paris, eh, Martin?"

Martin nodded and murmured, "Might be useful if we ever want to give them false information."

Harwood said, "Any of our merchant ships in port?"

Martin held up four fingers. Harwood said, "Well, they'll have to be re-routed, or better still, kept here for a few days. That's the devil of it. The mere mention of a leakage immobilises shipping for weeks."

Millington-Drake said thoughtfully: "It is very like a hunt for a man-eating tiger . . . an unknown killer at large, terrorising the Seven Seas. Do you think it's the *Scheer*?"

His question provoked a general discussion. The only thing certain was that the raider was a Pocket battleship. Keenly interested, Millington-Drake asked, "If she comes this way, can you handle her?"

Harwood answered promptly, "To fight her, certainly. To

## MICHAEL POWELL

finish her off, doubtful. If it's the *Scheer* or the *Graf Spee* she has six eleven-inch guns. Of my two eight-inch cruisers, the *Cumberland* is down at the Falklands boiler-cleaning. That only leaves *Exeter* and my two small six-inch cruisers, *Ajax* and *Achilles*, to police the whole coast from Pernambuco to the Falkland Islands."

Millington-Drake said thoughtfully, "Three thousand miles of sea. A tall order."

"Y—e—s," said Harwood, "a tall order." But he didn't seem too down-hearted.

Lieutenant-Commander Medley, Harwood's staff-officer, said, "May I remind you, sir, that by International Law, *Exeter* can't put into territorial waters here for another three months."

Harwood replied, "*Exeter* can't, but I can. I'm transferring my broad pendant to *Ajax*."

At nine o'clock on the morning of December 12th, Commodore Harwood's squadron, consisting of H.M.S. *Ajax*, H.M.S. *Exeter* and H.M.N.Z.S. *Achilles*, was steaming in line ahead, approximately on the thirty-fifth parallel of latitude and about one hundred miles off Punta del Este, at the mouth of the River Plate. For the first time since the outbreak of the war, the Commodore had three of the ships under his Command together. It was no accident.

Captain Woodhouse, the Captain of the *Ajax*, stepped to the side of the bridge and glanced astern at the other two cruisers keeping station. It was a perfect South Atlantic morning. Woodhouse wondered to himself why the Commodore had ordered this concentration at this particular time. As if in answer to his thoughts, the Commodore appeared on the bridge.

His formidable presence caused a little stir of self-consciousness at he came forward. Messengers stopped lounging and straightened their hats. So did the Officer of the Watch. Woodhouse, outwardly unperturbed, started to patrol the bridge so that he could be in earshot. He had an instinct that things were brewing.

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

wing of the bridge, hastily closed up to his Chief's elbow. Harwood, after a glance around which took in everything, including the weather, made straight for his high teak chair on the star-board side of the bridge, plumped himself down in it, and said in a voice that made everybody jump, "Staffy!"

Medley said, "Sir?" and Harwood said, "Make to *Achilles* and *Exeter*: I would like to see you on board Flagship at 11.00 to-day."

Woodhouse smiled to himself, with deep satisfaction. His instinct had been right. It was very rare indeed these days that an Admiral called a Council of Captains at Sea. But it proved to Woodhouse that Harwood had something very important to say to his Captains, something far too important and complicated to be signalled, and quite impossible to send by radio. Although he appeared outwardly calm, it was with great feelings of excitement that he came to Harwood's cabin at the appointed hour.

The three ships had come to stop twenty minutes earlier, and both *Achilles* and *Exeter* had lowered sea-boats.

The three Captains, Bell of *Exeter*, Parry of *Achilles*, Woodhouse of *Ajax*, and Medley sat down around the big table. Harwood himself remained standing at the head of the table. There was an historic pause. The ship, with her engines motionless, was strangely quiet. They could hear the water lapping around the stern.

Harwood gave a little self-conscious laugh and said, "I've—er . . . I've taken the rather unusual course of sending for you, because I wanted to see you and to give you, personally, my appreciation of the situation. I have ordered this concentration here, off the River Plate, because of news that I have received of the latest movements of the German Surface Raider which is at large in the South Atlantic. I would like you to look at the charts. The Admiralty have good information that this Pocket battleship—it may be the *Admiral Scheer* or the *Graf Spee* or the *Deutschland*—sailed from Kiel on August 21st. She took up position somewhere in the South Atlantic well before war was declared.



## MICHAEL POWELL

not. Hitler thought that, after the fall of Poland, Britain and France would make peace. However . . . on September 30th she sunk the *Clement* . . . here . . . off Pernambuco. She immediately left this area for mid-Atlantic, where between the 5th and the 10th her victims were the *Newton Beach*, the *Ashlea* and the *Huntsman*. Then she left hurriedly, to proceed to the west coast of Africa, where she sunk the *Trevanion*. Once again she moved to a new hunting ground and rounded the Cape into the Indian Ocean, presumably to attack the Cape-India-Australia routes, but she only sank a small tanker, the *Africa Shell* . . . here . . . in the Mozambique Channel. She then presumably doubled back, because some days ago she sank the Blue Star liner, *Doric Star* . . . there . . . As she knows that the *Doric Star* managed to get off a signal, it is obvious that the raider will be anxious to get out of that area as soon as possible. . . . Now, in my opinion, she will do one of three things. One—she will double back again into the Indian Ocean. Two—she will try and slip back to Germany as she came out . . . through the Denmark Strait . . . or three—before returning home, she will come over here to our part of the world—where she should have been all the time—to make a last killing among the grain ships and the meat cargoes from South America . . . and it's my opinion, that that is exactly what she will do!"

There was a pause as he finished speaking. Each Captain was solemn with his own thoughts, the thoughts of Action for which he had trained during the whole of his professional career.

Harwood sat down at the head of the table, and resumed in a different tone, the tone of a man who is dealing with immediate problems, "Making a guess at her probable speed, I estimate that if she were making for Rio she would be there this morning—December 12th. If she is making here . . . for the River Plate . . . and that is what I believe, then she will be here twenty-four hours later. To-morrow. My object is destruction of the enemy. My intention is to attack at once, day or night. She can out-gun and out-range us. So, as soon as we sight the Beast, we will



## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

separate flanks. *Ajax* and *Achilles* will attack in close company. *Exeter* will attack on her own. In this way, besides splitting the enemy's main armament, we can also report each other's fall of shot. I wish I had the *Cumberland*. I could do with another eight-inch cruiser. But she's still re-fitting in the Falklands. She won't rejoin us for a fortnight. Tell your ships' companies to be on their toes for the next few days. We will exercise my tactics for engaging a Pocket battleship, both in daylight and after dark to-day."

He said these last words in the voice of a Commander on the eve of battle. Nobody spoke or stirred. The smoke curled up from their cigarettes and was whirled away by the fans in the ceiling. Their eyes were fixed upon the square resolute figure at the head of the table in the white uniform, the powerful blunt hands drumming on the table, the thick grey hair, and the cunning eyes.

### III

## The Battle of the River Plate

CAPTAIN LANGSDORFF was desperately tired. Dove had been right in guessing that the Captain's gaiety when they met the *Altmark* a week ago, was the result of nerves stretched to breaking point. He was sleeping badly and smoking far too much. The strain of more than three months ceaseless vigilance had told on him.

He ground out the butt of the cigar he had been smoking and looked down at his big chart. There was the long line stretching from Hamburg to the Indian Ocean and back again, which marked his incredible voyage. There, on the chart before him were the counters representing the ships he had sunk; eighty thousand tons of British shipping sent to the bottom.

How many times during those weary weeks at sea had he crossed and re-crossed his own course. . . . How many leagues of sea had he covered, always pressed by the necessity to conceal his tracks, and after each kill to confuse the scent and move his precious ship a thousand miles away from the hue and cry. His very humanity had been against him. Who knows? If he had ruthlessly destroyed all who crossed his path, perhaps he would not have had these powerful Hunting-Groups, of which he had been warned, scouring the seas for him. He looked again at the chart and his tangled course, up to the sinking of the *Streonshalh* five days ago, when he had made his decision. Now it was the 12th December, and the line of his course upon the chart, stretched straight as a die for the last five days, straight as the line of his destiny—westward.

Early on the morning of the 13th, Langsdorff arrived off the coast of Brazil, slightly to the north of the River Plate. Harwood had exactly divined his intentions. He had decided to cruise up and down at a safe distance from the shore, until he sighted a prize worthy of his attention. He knew that some very rich con-

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

video. Before he could be reported, he could do appalling damage which would amply repay his venture westward!—and he could then escape back into the vast spaces of the South Atlantic, and so home at his leisure.

At 05.02, his radar indicated the presence of ships to the south-west. He altered course directly towards them, and presently sighted four thin masts which he soon identified as H.M.S. *Exeter*. A little later the *Graf Spee's* look-out reported two low-built ships which they hastily identified as two destroyers. Langsdorff gave the order to close at full speed. He believed that his moment had come, that these two destroyers and the *Exeter* were escorting the rich convoy for which he was looking. In a few minutes he realised his mistake. At the precise moment when Swanston, the lookout aboard *Ajax*, first spotted smoke upon the horizon, Langsdorff found that he was heading, at twenty-eight knots, directly towards three enemy light-cruisers. A paralysing moment of indecision followed. His orders were to avoid an engagement and to bring his ship back home. But if he had identified the three small ships, it was just as certain that they had identified him by now. If he altered course and tried to escape, it was unlikely, with their greatly inferior armament, that they would attack him. But he would be reported and his whereabouts would be known, and there was no telling whether or not one of the Hunting-Groups was near at hand. These thoughts flashed through his head as the ship rushed on at fifty feet a second. He realized that he was committed to battle. His only chance was to destroy the three small cruisers and to disappear again into the Atlantic. The die was cast. His moment had indeed come. He altered course to bring all his guns to bear upon the enemy, and gave the order to open fire.

On the morning of the 13th December, when the Alarm to Action Stations started ringing, the prisoners were all asleep. It was an urgent series of five staccato bursts, repeated for several minutes. Everywhere men were sitting up sleepily, and looking

## MICHAEL POWELL

Stubbs, the Captain of the *Doric Star* said, "She's bought something this time."

They all listened in silence to the rush of heavy boots up ladders and along the deck. They heard the shouting of orders and the clang of steel doors, then the whine of power-operated turrets. The petty officers could be heard, bawling orders. The loudspeakers were screaming out commands in hysterical German.

"It's no merchantman this time!" Stubbs said happily. "I hope it's one of our big fellows. We'll blow this tin-can right out of the water!"

"And us with it!" said a fellow Captain.

Stubbs said, "You're right! I hadn't thought of that."

At that precise moment, the *Graf Spee* opened fire. The sound was tremendous. The whole ship shuddered. Crockery started to rain down on the men in the pantry corner, and clouds of dust came down the air-vents and filled the room. People yelled, coughed and cried out: "We're hit, we're hit!"

Only Dove and Stubbs kept their heads and roared, "We're not hit! Get down on the floor. That was her first eleven-inch salvo!"

When Swanston the leading look-out on the port watch aboard H.M.S. *Ajax* first reported the smoke on the horizon, the Chief Yeoman came over to him and looked at it with his own glass.

Swanston said, "D'ye see it, Chief?"

The smoke was still a long way away, and there was some mirage. The Chief answered, "Aye. Some merchantman."

Meanwhile, Duncan Lewin who, was at that moment Officer of the Watch, went to the voice-pipe connected with the Captain's and the Commodore's sea-cabins and reported first to Woodhouse, "Captain, sir. Look-out reports smoke bearing Red 100."

Woodhouse acknowledged this for the routine report that it was. Lewin then repeated it to Harwood. They were in the main

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

area of shipping and, beyond the necessity for increased alertness that morning, there was no reason to suppose that this would be the expected enemy, especially coming from the north-west. Harwood said. "Tell *Exeter* to investigate."

The signal was passed by S—P, and was crossed by a flag signal from *Exeter* saying that she had sighted the smoke. In obedience to Harwood's order, *Exeter* altered course and headed towards the smoke. She looked very fine as she came up fast on the Flagship's quarter. The gap between them widened steadily.

Swanston, who had started all this activity, suddenly reminded everybody of his presence by saying, from the cruiser-glass where he was still stationed, "Mr. Lewin, sir. Can you see those upper works? She looks like a Pocket battleship."

The slight extra suspense during the early morning stand-to, had been dissipated by the sunshine and by the day's routine. Lewin will always remember how he answered, scoffing, "You see Pocket battleships everywhere, Swanston. That's the third since Sunday." The Duty Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Pennefather, took Swanston's foreboding more seriously, but there was still little to be seen.

At that moment, Captain Woodhouse came on deck, saying, "Well, Pennefather? Can you make her out?"

Pennefather answered that there was too much haze, and at an order from Woodhouse he went up the mast to identify what was under the smoke. From that moment, events moved quickly. The Chief Yeoman reported, "*Exeter* signalling, sir."

A light was signalling from *Exeter*'s flag-deck, as Pennefather scrambled up into the mast-head. The Yeoman read out: "I—think—it—is—a—Pocket—battleship."

Simultaneously a yell from Pennefather and a roar from Swanston confirmed the news. The Chief Yeoman and two look-outs shouted together that *Exeter* was flying Flag Five: Enemy in Sight. Woodhouse ordered, "Sound the Alarm!" This called every man to his Action Station.

Chance had favoured Harwood's battle tactics. *Exeter* would

## MICHAEL POWELL

soon be within range of the enemy. Her Battle Ensigns were going up at mast-heads and yard-arms and her turrets were swinging around in unison.

At that moment, at 06.18 local time, 14.18 G.M.T., the *Graf Spee* opened fire with a full broadside: three great black mushrooms of smoke with vivid orange-red centres, an awe-inspiring sight. By now all three cruisers were going over twenty knots, and were heading towards the enemy to close the range as quickly as possible. The foaming wake swirled higher and higher from their sterns as the ships gathered speed. The wind was whistling through the stays and the increased roar of the boiler-room fans could be heard above the wind. A few seconds later the *Graf Spee's* first salvo arrived. Great fountains of water went up into the air near *Ajax* and straddled *Exeter* as well. She was firing at *Exeter* with her two forward turrets and at the Flagship with her after turrets. Harwood, who had his glasses on *Exeter* said, "We've split her fire all right! Their gunnery is very accurate." He turned his glasses back on the enemy.

In the gunnery control-tower, the Gunnery Officer ordered "Broadsides!" He leant over and watched the lights come up in the Gun Ready Lamp Box. Then he announced over the speaking-tube to the bridge, "We are opening fire, sir."

"At last!" exclaimed Harwood thankfully.

The Firing Bell went ting-ting. Then the whole bridge shook as the six-inch turrets fired. The range was about eighteen thousand yards, so the next broadside was on its way before the first salvo landed. Everyone had their glasses to their eyes. The midshipman reported to Woodhouse, "Aircraft ready, sir."

Harwood said, "The *Exeter's* straddling her . . . got her range. By gad! So have we!"

Woodhouse ordered, "Prepare to catapult aircraft!"

The catapult platform was situated aft, in a very unpleasant position. Lewin, the pilot, and his observer, Kearney, were in their seats, and the engine was roaring. At intervals, the Firing Bell would ring out . . . then the guns crashed, shaking the whole

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

ship and enveloping her in clouds of drifting orange-brown cordite smoke.

It was a spectacular take-off. They were enveloped in swirling smoke, the wind was whistling and shrieking through the stays and halyards. The aircraft roared, the guns crashed out, Lewin gave the signal. There was a flash and a bang from the catapult machinery and they were airborne! Lewin banked steeply. He headed towards the *Graf Spee*, and soon the whole battle area lay beneath him.

The four ships were at maximum range, although the *Exeter* was closing with the enemy rapidly. She was already several miles away from the two six-inch cruisers, who were gathering speed to the northward. At this stage of the action, *Ajax* and *Achilles* had not concentrated their gun-fire. On the alarm being given each ship had gone into action independently with all guns at highest elevation, and they were firing rapidly and accurately at the enemy, who was replying with equal accuracy. His ack-ack guns opened up on Lewin, who was by now close enough overhead to see, with some discomfort, that the Pocket battleship had two fighter aircraft and that one of them was already about to be catapulted.

At that very moment, one of the six-inch cruisers scored her first hit, right on the catapult platform. The aircraft was wrecked. Lewin reported the successful hit to the Flagship and drew a deep breath. By now the ack-ack guns had found his range and he climbed higher.

From his vantage point, Lewin could see that the big battleship was seriously worried and puzzled by Harwood's tactics. Langsdorff had been trapped into dividing his fire, and his small antagonists were shooting very accurately. Evidently he appreciated his situation, for the *Graf Spee* altered course and all her turrets swung round on the same bearings. She was concentrating her main armament on *Exeter*.

On the bridge of *Ajax*, Swanston had just reported, "Enemy altering course towards us, sir." In answer to which, Har-



## MICHAEL POWELL

wood exclaimed, "That suits us!" But a second later, Woodhouse got the spotter's report from the G.C.P. that *Exeter* was now the main target. Harwood's expression changed. "The devil she is," he said. "We can't have that! Alter course to bring all guns to bear. That'll make him take some of his guns off *Exeter*."

About ten minutes had passed since the start of the action, and *Ajax* and *Achilles* were now concentrating their fire as originally planned by Harwood in the Orders of the day before. Concentration of gun-fire means that two or more ships act as one. One Gunnery Control passes all the necessary orders, the range, the deflection, and the firing signal, to the consorts. The consorts do as they are told, applying what is known as "the position in line" correction for their distance and bearing from the Master Ship. All good Gunnery-Officers like to control their own guns, and naturally hate Concentration (unless they happen to be the Master Gunner), but it increases the hitting rate and prevents confusion in spotting the fall of shot and, in theory at any rate, all the shells from all the ships should fall simultaneously and in much the same piece of water.

By now the din was tremendous, with both small cruisers hammering away as hard as they could to distract the *Graf Spee* from *Exeter*. A look-out reported, "*Exeter* hit for'ard, sir. A lot of smoke." And very soon afterwards he reported a big explosion and a sharp turn to port by the wounded ship. Harwood groaned. If the *Graf Spee* had the wit to concentrate on any one of them, she could destroy her by sheer weight of armour. Horrified the look-out reported, "Direct hit on *Exeter* . . . *Exeter* altering course to starboard . . . *Exeter* hit again . . . and again. . . . Only one turret firing now, sir!"

This was at about 06.40. *Exeter's* change of direction had been made in order to fire torpedoes and she was hit on the turn. It brought her end-on to the Flagship, so that on *Ajax* they could see she was listing to starboard, although she was nine miles off. This was the most desperate time of the action. A salvo of eleven-inch shell, high explosive, fell a few yards from the port



## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

Splinters peppered the ship, causing several casualties and damaging communications by knocking out the radio in the gunnery control-tower. Concentration of gun-power naturally ceased and this, coupled with *Graf Spee* making herself a very difficult target, for she was nearly end-on to the two six-inch cruisers and was making small alterations of course, made the British fire ineffective for some time. The fact that *Graf Spee* did not appear to have suffered damage was bad for morale. *Exeter* seemed to be out of the battle and out of control. She was already listing and another direct hit might finish her off. Harwood knew that it was now or never. This was no time to husband resources, the battle might be lost or won in the next few minutes. The disparity of size between his own small ships and the enemy no longer mattered. There is one thing that can never be taught to any nation or Navy, but can only come from a hundred years of tradition and discipline, and that is the Offensive Spirit. Men can build, equip and train a modern Navy in twenty years, but they cannot endow their ships with battle honours nor can they create that spirit. It was with three hundred and fifty years of battle experience behind him that Harwood exclaimed, "What's our range?"

Woodhouse recognised the tone and, glancing at the indicator, answered, "Eighteen thousand, sir."

"In we go! Woodie!" was the reply. "To hell with battle instructions. We've got to draw his fire."

He couldn't have said anything that would have pleased Woodhouse better. He answered. "Aye, aye, sir. Steer straight for her, Pilot!"

The *Ajax* turned like a destroyer about forty degrees towards the *Graf Spee*. Woodhouse stepped to the port side of the bridge and watched *Achilles* come foaming round after her consort. When both ships were heading directly towards the enemy, Harwood gave the order, "Make to *Achilles*: 30 knots!" He was flinging his cruisers at the Pocket battleship like two destroyers.

Several minutes went by. The range was down to 13,000

## MICHAEL POWELL

*Spee* off *Exeter*. She was closing in to finish her. Salvo after salvo battered the eight-inch cruiser. All her guns were silenced by now and she was on fire in several places. It was obvious that she was out of control. Her engines were evidently intact, for she was still travelling at full speed with a twenty degree list to starboard. She was pouring out black smoke from her funnel while the smoke and flame of fires on board made her deck and superstructure almost invisible. At 07.06 Harwood ordered a swing to starboard to bring all guns to bear on the enemy, but the range was still too long.

Round they went again, their forward turrets firing all the time, and rushed once more towards the Pocket battleship. The range shortened rapidly. It was magnificent. They were practically at point blank range. Now their fire was beginning to have an effect upon the enemy. Several hits were seen on the superstructure. She started evasive action and turned away from *Exeter*. She began firing at the two small cruisers with both the five-nines and eleven-inch.

Woodhouse gave the order to "Snake the line." And, still closing the range at full speed, the two ships started to twist and turn. The *Graf Spee* seemed bewildered. Her firing became ragged. Once again, Harwood gave the order to swing to starboard and brought all guns to bear. At this deadly range they could hardly miss. Hit after hit was made upon the enemy. With their six-inch shells, they could hardly hope to deal a crippling blow on the heavily-armoured battleship, but tremendous damage was being inflicted upon the superstructure and decks, and at least two of the five-point-nine guns were knocked out.

Woodhouse said, "We've done it. She's altering course!"

The *Graf Spee* had turned away from the *Exeter* and put all her guns on to the two small cruisers, except her five-nines which continued to fire at *Exeter*. *Ajax* and *Achilles* opened the range slightly but went on firing with all guns and snaking the line.

At 07.25, when the range was down to about four and a half miles, *Ajax* received a direct hit from an eleven-inch shell, put-

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

with no trajectory, it went through the armour as if it were paper. It was a most eccentric shell for it ricocheted all over the ship, doing appalling damage, before it burst. It infuriated Harwood, who roared at the Gunnery-Officer down the voice-pipe when the latter reported the two turrets out of action: "You've still got two left!"

His midshipman appeared at Woodhouse's elbow, reporting, "Captain, sir. From X-turret, fire in ammunition hoist."

Woodhouse said calmly, "Well, nip down and see if it's under control."

The turret was jammed by the base of the shell penetrating the armour. Blacksmiths were already working on it. In X-turret the men were all Royal Marines. They could get neither in nor out, and smoke and fire was coming up the ammunition hoist. The Lieutenant of Marines had ordered the hoist spraying system to be switched on, but it was dead. At that moment a torrent of water came from above, like a miracle from Heaven. A marine had got a hose in from the upper deck.

A breathless messenger arrived at Harwood's side on the bridge and reported, "From Commander, sir. It was a direct hit on X ammunition lobby, sir."

Firing was still going on from the forward turrets. Woodhouse asked, "Any casualties?"

"Yes, sir," was the answer, "I'm afraid so, sir. Shell passed right through the Commander's and Secretary's cabin, sir. Went down to the next deck and did no good to X lobby, sir, and came up again and burst in the Commodore's cabin."

The Chief Yeoman, at that moment, said, "Message from *Exeter*, sir."

Harwood hurried across to where he stood by the voice-pipe. He snatched the signal from him and read aloud to Woodhouse: "All guns out of action. We are still sea-worthy." He looked at Woodhouse and said, "She must be in a pretty grim condition. I wonder if she can make the Falklands?"

The message was sent, and in a few minutes the answer came

## MICHAEL POWELL

Harwood blinked. There was a silence. Both men could picture the conditions on board the cruiser. She was plainly visible away to the southward, still burning. A messenger came to Woodhouse, who reported to Harwood, "Ammunition getting short, sir."

Harwood started out of his reverie and said, "Eh! What? Well—scrape the bin!" Then his thoughts returned to Hookie Bell and he said to the Chief Yeoman, "Make to *Exeter*: 'Proceed Falklands. Godspeed.'"

He turned to Woodhouse and said, "Well. Let's get on with it."

It was now 07.40, and the pace a bit too hot to last. Both ships had lengthened the range. The *Graf Spee* could not break off the action, of course, since the other ships were faster than she was, but it was obvious that she had had enough. Firing had been continuous for a hundred minutes and was still going on. Harwood paced up and down once or twice, then said to Woodhouse, "We must open up the range, Woodie. I'm going to break off the action and take her on again after dark. Turn stern on to her and make smoke." Then to the Chief Yeoman he said, "Make to *Achilles*: 'I am breaking off the action.'"

Woodhouse gave the order, "Port 30."

At that moment, there was a tremendous crash aft. A shell had carried away the main top-mast. It was one of the last shots of this phase of the action.

The prisoners of the *Graf Spee*, who were all active men, were in a very unpleasant position during the battle. They were blind and they were defenceless. They were in danger of their lives and could do nothing about it. They knew that the *Graf Spee* was being attacked by one or more ships, but they didn't know who the attackers were. Patriotism inspired them to believe that they were British. But all of them agreed that the most terrible part of the experience, while the battle raged over their heads and during the long chase which followed, when minutes seemed like hours and hours like days, when time ceased to matter and night and day became identical.

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

certainty of the outcome of the battle coupled with their anxiety to know the fate of their own ships and their complete helplessness during the game of cat and mouse which was being played over a vast area, beyond the steel walls in which they were imprisoned.

Overhead, great pieces of jagged metal could be heard rattling about the superstructure and showering on to the deck. There was a rending crash as part of the radar mast was carried away, a lucky hit in the early stages of the battle, which did a great deal to destroy the accuracy of *Graf Spee's* gunnery.

Debris came raining down on the roof of the prison. They could hear yells and feet running. Orders were bawled over their loud-speakers which were still connected to the main system. Something serious had obviously happened, but there was no time to guess what, for in quick succession the *Graf Spee* was hit half a dozen times on the superstructure directly around and above the prisoners. Each time that a hundred-pound projectile from the six-inch cruisers, or a two-hundred-and-fifty-six-pound one from the *Exeter*, struck the Pocket battleship, there was a sudden shudder followed by the gashing and rending of metal, the screams of the wounded and the bellowed orders on the loud-speakers mixed with the thunderous concussion of the eleven-inch salvos, the crashing of the five-point-nines.

Anyone who has been in a civilian air-raid can picture the scene for himself. It was a continuous bombardment on both the giving and the receiving end, for over a hundred minutes. In Dove's own words, "It was no picnic."

When Harwood finally broke off the action, the *Graf Spee* headed Westward at full speed. As we know, Harwood was content to let her get out of range but not out of sight. He had given orders to *Ajax* and *Achilles* to keep outside the enemy's gun-range which was far longer than their own. Of course, when the range shortened, either side was liable to let fly. This indeed was what happened and desultory firing went on all day during the long chase.

## MICHAEL POWELL

and nearer to the land. The Hunters followed at a cautious distance. When they closed disrespectfully the hunted beast growled, and great fountains of water sprung up between it and its pursuers. They would answer in their turn. And excited watchers on the distant shore declared that a great Naval Battle was raging somewhere out at sea. Already radio amateurs had picked up some of the signals during the battle and the rumour was spreading that, somewhere out at sea off the River Plate, British and German forces were fighting. From Rio to Bahia Blanca, peaceful merchantmen were hurrying into the nearest port and the cables were humming with long coded telegrams from the Admiralty to Naval Attachés in the Argentine, Brazil and Uruguay.

When the last rim of the sun on that momentous day of Wednesday, 13th December, was vanishing behind low purple hills, the lighthouse keeper at Punta del Este made out the dark shapes of naval ships, saw flashes like summer lightning and heard the thunder of the guns.

## IV

### Wednesday Night and Thursday

WHEN THE LONG-DISTANCE connection of The Red Meat Packing Company of Chicago with the beef-producing country of Uruguay sent Mike Fowler to Montevideo to record and broadcast bird calls to the housewives of America he knew as much about South America and the River Plate as the average American or Briton: he knew nothing. For him it was just another job.

When he arrived in Montevideo, which he had been told to make his base, he didn't even know where it was on the map. Why should he? His ticket had been bought for him. So it was with mild surprise and approval that he discovered Montevideo to be a large, modern city on the north bank of the Rio de la Plata (at that point fifty miles wide), with one of the finest and largest natural harbours in the world, with miles of bathing beaches only a stone's throw from busy streets, with luxury hotels and sky-scrapers, and even with those highest products of modern civilisation: bars and night-clubs. There was one particular bar down on the beach, Manolo's which opened late and never seemed anxious to close, where Mike really felt at home. He ate there, he made appointments there, they took messages for him, and Manolo cashed his cheques.

Mike had bought a powerful and battered station-wagon to transport the equipment, and had hired an enthusiastic young man from one of the local radio stations to run it. It was the very latest portable set, fully equipped with gadgets and spares.

On the morning of the 13th December, in Montevideo, Mike walked round to the Plaza Independencia. It was a very large square surrounded by long, low buildings and vaulted arcades, except on one side where the Palacio Salvo, Montevideo's only sky-scraper, rose twenty-seven storeys into the air. One of the ugliest buildings in the world, from its upper floors it commanded a magnificent view over the River Plate and on clear



## MICHAEL POWELL

coast of Argentina. They could even see the haze of smoke rising from the great city of Buenos Aires, one hundred and twenty-five miles up-river.

Mike bought a paper at his favourite kiosk, and walked on towards the Palacio Salvo. On the way he met a fellow-countryman, who covered B.A. and Montevideo for the United Press, in a high state of excitement.

"Heard the news?" he panted. "There's been a big Naval battle out at sea early this morning. And it's still going on. The British and the Germans. They can hear the guns from Punta del Este. Nobody knows anything yet, but the *Exeter* is in it. They broke wireless silence at about half-past six and the air has been full of stuff ever since."

He was racing across the Square as he spoke, and Mike ran with him.

"Where are you going?" yelled Mike.

"Punta del Este! It's a running fight. They may be coming this way. You ought to get your firm to let you cover it."

He leapt into his waiting car and roared away.

Now for the first time Mike noticed that there were little clusters of people talking in excited tones. Suddenly the usual newspaper van fetched up at the corner of the Square with a most unusual screech of brakes and was mobbed by a crowd of excited newsboys, who grabbed their parcels and ran away at full speed. Certainly there was something happening. Mike began to get as excited as everybody else. Suppose that one of the ships was running for shelter and that the battle did come into the River Plate; he would be the only American radio reporter on the spot. . . . It would be the chance of a life-time. . . . He could scoop the world. . . . His firm would go crazy. . . . Mike knew a man who had an apartment on the twenty-fifth floor of the Palacio. He took the elevator and woke him up. Together they went out on to the wide balcony. There was nothing to be seen, except that every ship in sight was heading into port as fast as they could go. Not one was outward bound. Then, as they stared towards the eastern horizon, they heard a faint, low, rumbling sound.



## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

dull mutter, a rumbling like distant thunder, the sound of the guns.

The telephone rang and Mike's friend answered it.

He said, "It's the German News Agency report."

He listened for a minute, then said, "Ring me back if you hear any more," rang off and turned to Mike. "It's big," he said, "the Germans are claiming a big Naval victory. And the British are denying the whole story. The Germans claim that one of their Pocket battleships came up this morning with the *Exeter* and two smaller cruisers, which they identify as the *Ajax* and the *Achilles*. There was a running fight and the *Exeter* was knocked out and sunk. The two small cruisers were badly damaged and broke off the action and the whole shebang is heading this way. The British haven't issued any statement yet. Usual Admiralty stuff: 'lie low and say nuthin.' But there's obviously some truth in it. You'd better get on to your firm and nail the job for yourself, before they start sending down one of their high-powered, golden-voiced, ace reporters!"

But Mike was already racing down twenty-five flights of stairs. The lift was a local job and not worth waiting for. It was eleven-thirty.

By noon the whole world had heard the German news-story, and the Admiralty realised that there was no further point in preserving secrecy. The truth had to be told, although the running fight was still going on. So an official story was put out, briefly stating that there had been an engagement with a Pocket battleship which was still continuing and denying that the *Exeter* had been sunk. By now the whole Western Hemisphere was ablaze with excitement. The war had come to their very doors. New reports and rumours were pouring out from every city on the Atlantic sea-board of South America. By the afternoon, it was plain that the battle was moving into the area of the River Plate. Buenos Aires and Montevideo were in a ferment of excitement. The *Exeter*, still listing to starboard, a smoking, battered

## MICHAEL POWELL

at slow speed, for Captain Bell, anxious for the safety of his ship, had come in close to the coast so that, if necessary, he could beach her. The coastline down to Mar del Plata and far beyond was lined with watchers, and mounted parties from the *Estancias* with English sympathies organised a kind of coast-guard watch which went on day and night, in case they could be of some help to the wounded vessel.

When the *Graf Spee* fled westward none of the British imagined, for a moment, that Langsdorff would be making for neutral waters, let alone for a neutral port. To her pursuers, the *Graf Spee* did not appear to have been badly damaged. They were quite certain that Langsdorff would break seaward, either to the north-east or to the south-west. If he could lose himself again in the wide Atlantic, he could repair his damage and eventually make his way back to Germany.

When the incredible fact became clear to Harwood that the *Graf Spee* was entering the River Plate, he ordered the *Achilles* to go round the north end of Lobos Island, while the *Ajax* followed directly after the Pocket battleship, which appeared to be going straight for Montevideo. He still couldn't believe the truth that the *Graf Spee* was fleeing into a neutral port.

The River Plate, at its mouth, is a hundred miles wide and divided into two channels by a large sandbank, known as "The English Bank"—in the strange way that sandbanks, landfalls and ocean-currents crop up all over the globe, tagged for ever by seamen with Anglo-Saxon names. Heaven and the Admiralty know who named the English Bank. Sebastian Cabot passed that way and Sir Francis Drake singed the King of Spain's beard at Maldonado. Two hundred years later, Admiral George Anson also flew his flag there against the Spaniards and Captain Cook charted its shores. Now guns were heard again at sea off Maldonado.

Punta del Este is the south-eastern point of Uruguay. It is a long, low spit of land. On one side the river presses past the golden sands and rolling dunes on its way to the sea. On the

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

seaside hotels. A tall water-tower dominates the peninsula, which is covered with little white houses, and at the tip where jagged reefs run for half a mile out into the sea, a small lighthouse stands by the harbour looking across to its big brother on the Island of Lobos, across the channel. There are many exposed reefs and two islands, one of them low and wooded, the other exposed and rocky upon which the lighthouse stands. A seal rookery covers the rocks below the lighthouse and, at the first sound of the guns, dozens of the great animals hurled themselves off the low cliffs and were shattered on the rocks below, adding their casualties to the follies and heroisms of men. For, as darkness fell and the shape of the fleeing ship became more and more indistinct against the darkening western sky, the pursuers shortened the range and pressed the Hunted Beast so closely that he snarled in reply. With only two ships to block the whole river, Harwood was determined not to lose touch with his quarry and to give him no opportunity to double round the English Bank and so out to sea again. The battle continued thus with sharp attack and sullen reply up to the very doors of Montevideo.

By now the whole north bank of the River Plate was in an uproar of excitement. The road from Punta del Este to Montevideo was crowded with automobiles tearing from one vantage point to another, guided by the flashes of the guns. Every rocky hill, every roof-top and every church tower was packed with people straining their eyes out over the broad expanse of the river. Then darkness fell. None of the ships was showing any light and there was no more firing. A hush of expectation fell upon the coast and upon the world. It is difficult to convey so many years later what it meant to the Western Hemisphere, and particularly to the neutral countries of South America, to have the war brought so dramatically to its doors, in this, the first important battle of the War.

After the excitement and suspense of the day it was to be expected that a large battleship, wearing no flag, showing no

## MICHAEL POWELL

video, was at once reported to the Port Authority, who telephoned the Head of the Government and the Naval Command Headquarters. Capitán de Fragata José Rodrigues Varela, accompanied by Capitán de Corbeta Fernando Fontana, on board the corvette *Lavalleja*, was instructed to investigate. His orders were to find out what ship this was, why it had come into port, what her requirements were and the number of dead and wounded on board. The *Lavalleja* already had been alerted, for ever since news of the westward-chase had reached Montevideo from Punta del Este, and when it became clear that the running fight had already infringed neutral territory and might very easily go much further, Uruguayan Naval Headquarters, with the approval of their Government, had prepared to resist any further encroachment, by force if necessary. The fact that the entire Naval force, plus shore-batteries, that Uruguay could muster was about knee-high to either Commodore Harwood's or Captain Langsdorff's command was beside the point, as any seaman knows. The principle is the thing. Ships and the men in them are great respecters of law and of that which is right. No man can command a ship who doesn't respect custom and tradition, and who does not expect as much of others as he does of himself. So it was with a beating heart, a high spirit and the full authority of a Sovereign State that Captain Varela, standing on the bridge of his tiny corvette, approached the enormous dark shape of the Pocket battleship, which was not yet anchored but was still slowly moving through the Outer Harbour.

When the corvette was about a hundred yards away from the bigger vessel, Varela ordered the searchlight switched on and hailed her: "This is the corvette *Lavalleja* of the Uruguayan Navy. Where are your lights? What ship is that?"

After a short pause a voice answered him from the bridge high above. It was Captain Kay.

"We are a German warship. Is the holding ground good here? Can we anchor?"

Although he had guessed that this was the German ship, the

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

impressed and confounded as he was. So it was in rather a wavering voice that Varela shouted back: "Yes. You can anchor here. The holding ground is good!"

An acknowledgement came back and orders were shouted to the men in the bows, who were already standing by the anchor-chain. Flashing torches could be seen, waving high in the air. Then there was a sudden transformation and the fore-part of the ship showed lights. The after-part was still in darkness. The two Uruguayan officers were conferring together in excited voices while the corvette kept pace with the battleship. Then Kay's voice was heard from the bridge again, "The Captain asks you to come on board! We are lowering a ladder on the port side."

Varela acknowledged and gave the orders to come round under the battleship's stern, by the quarter-deck. Suddenly, high up in the air, on the bridge of the battleship a new voice was heard. It dominated without effort all other voices, as a single instrument can dominate an orchestra. It was the voice of Langsdorff and Varela realised at once that it was the Captain who was speaking. It could be no other. He hardly seemed to raise his voice and yet the tired, effortless commands were heard in every part of the ship. The ship herself seemed to listen and to be cured of her blindness and uncertainty. Suddenly there was the roar and rattle of the anchor-chain, followed by the plunge of the anchor into the water. Red and white torches flashed in the bows and on the bridge. Langsdorff paid out fifteen fathoms and then gave the order to stop. There was silence. For the first time for nearly four months, the *Graf Spee* rode at her anchor.

The after-part of the battleship was in complete darkness. As the corvette approached the stern, they could see the flashes of torches where men moved to and fro. When they came alongside the quarter-deck, a naked electric bulb at the end of a cable was lowered by a German officer, revealing a rope ladder. Ordering his men to hang on and wait, Varela scrambled up the ladder, followed by Fontana. Hertzberg was waiting for him at the top, accompanied by a Quarter-Master and two armed

## MICHAEL POWELL

with proper formality, but the Germans looked exhausted and dishevelled, and the Quarter-Master had his head bandaged. As their feet touched the deck, Varela and Fontana saluted formally and the salute was returned. Hertzberg apologised for their appearance and for the lack of electric light, and asked them to follow him to the Captain's cabin. All four men carried powerful torches. Varela could see the shapes of men lying about on the quarter-deck, exhausted after the long day's battle. By now it was eleven o'clock at night. Hertzberg led them along a passage lit by an occasional naked bulb. The passage, and the cabins adjoining it, appeared to be the first-aid quarters. There was a smell of chloroform and disinfectant. A man wearing a red-cross band on his arm was kneeling on the floor, operating on the stump of a sailor's leg with a pair of scissors. The walk along the passage was difficult for the floor was covered with dead and wounded men. The impression of the recent battle was so great that Varela hardly took in any details.

They entered the forward super-structure and crossed a small flat where a sentry was standing. Hertzberg opened the door of the Captain's cabin and motioned them to enter.

There was only one officer waiting in the cabin, in the uniform of a Lieutenant. He was there to act as interpreter. He informed the Uruguayans that the Captain would be coming down from the bridge at any moment. As he spoke, there was a sharp order outside and steps rang on the steel ladder.

Langsdorff entered. He had never left the bridge all day and his clothes, beneath his uniform coat, were a sweater, pyjamas and sea-boots. He had received a splinter wound on the scalp and his face was covered with dried crusts of blood. He had also been wounded in the left arm and the sleeve had been torn off it whilst he had been given first-aid. A first-aid Petty Officer followed the Captain in, and during the interview which followed he put a proper bandage and sling on the wounded arm which had just been dressed with a field dressing. The two Uruguayans bowed in silence. Langsdorff gave a little

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

bow in reply and said: "Good evening. Captain Langsdorff, Commandant of the *Graf Spee*."

Varela felt his head whirling with excitement and confusion. He pulled himself together, and made a formal speech stating that they were representatives of the Uruguayan Government and had orders to find out the reason of the arrival of the foreign battleship. He also asked the number of casualties and offered help. Langsdorff replied that there had been a battle since early that morning between his vessel and three British ships. It had continued until only an hour ago when, just after dark, a shell had hit the bridge and he had received his wound. At that moment the Medical Officer, sent for by Langsdorff, came into the cabin covered in blood. After a very short conversation he left, and Langsdorff informed Varela that the *Graf Spee*'s casualties were more than thirty dead and very many wounded. One of them was blinded and needed urgent medical attention. Varela at once offered to take this man off with them to the hospital. Meanwhile, arrangements would be made to receive the others in hospitals ashore.

Langsdorff went on to say that he wished to see his Ambassador as soon as possible. He needed time and facilities from the Uruguayan Government to make his ship seaworthy. His evaporators had been damaged and his galleys destroyed. To Varela's surprise, he was quite ready to talk about the battle. Impatiently pushing the first-aid man aside, he demonstrated how the British ships had divided his fire, using three fingers of each hand as the two turrets of the *Graf Spee*. He said the battle had been without a definite decision, although he believed he had sunk the *Exeter*.

Varela was deeply impressed by Langsdorff. It was extraordinary the attraction that the man exercised over everyone who met him. Varela watched with fascination the gestures of the slim hands, he saw the fire and passion in the fine melancholy face, the flashes of elegance and humour. If Dove had been present, he would have seen what Varela did not see: at the



## MICHAEL POWELL

back of Langsdorff's eyes a puzzled light, a look of uncertainty, the look of a man to whom the incredible has happened, and who cannot yet believe it.

After a while Langsdorff ceased talking. Fascinated though he was, both as a man and as a professional sailor, Varela realised it was time to withdraw. The blinded German sailor was already on board the corvette. Varela made a little speech to Langsdorff, assuring him on behalf of the Government that everything that could be done to help would be done. Formal calls would be made in the morning, but in the special circumstances if Captain Langsdorff wished to go ashore at once arrangements would be made for a Naval escort and a car to the German Embassy. Otherwise, his orders were to request everybody to await the official visit of the Commandant of the Port at 9 a.m.

The interview was over. Langsdorff rose and shook hands, and the two Uruguayans took their leave.

When they came on deck, there were already dozens of small craft, tugs, motor-boats, row-boats, circling the *Graf Spee*. Most of the merchant ships that were lying a few cable-lengths from the *Graf Spee* had switched on all their lights, so that the scene was no longer dark but lit by a ghostly radiance. Already cars were arriving on the Mole and turning their headlights so that they pointed towards the battleship, in a vain attempt to pick her out across half a mile of water. The news was running through the city like a prairie-fire. The cinemas and night-clubs, restaurants and bars, were emptying into the streets.

It was three-thirty in the morning now. Yet all the lights were burning in the Cabildo.

In Dr. Guani's office there were three men. Dr. Guani himself stood at the tall windows and looked out at the lights of his city. He was a very small man with one of the largest and wisest heads that ever sat upon a small man's shoulders. A cosmopolitan, who had made Paris his home for twenty years, he had been prominent in the foundation of the League of Nations after the 1914



## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

guished diplomatic career, he was now the Foreign Minister of his country.

The second man in the office was a large German diplomat, who was seated rigidly upon an uncomfortable settee. He looked the successful business man that he was. He was also an extremely shrewd, adroit, power-diplomat. This was Dr. Langmann, the Ambassador.

The third man was Captain Langsdorff. He was seated beside his Ambassador. He had come straight off his ship, although his arm was now in a neat sling underneath his uniform coat with the sleeve pinned across it. The cuts on his face had been covered with plaster. He leant back in his corner of the settee making a vivid contrast with the diplomat. He was dropping with sleep and his eyes burned in his head, but they were fixed on Dr. Guani, in whose hands now lay the life of his ship.

Guani sighed and turned from the window. He walked slowly across to his desk. He turned and still standing addressed the two Germans gravely and courteously, speaking first to Dr. Langmann: "All I can promise you at this stage, Your Excellency, is to give every consideration to your Government's request within the limits of International Law." Then to Langsdorff he said: "In the morning I will send a commission of experts on board your ship, Captain Langsdorff, to assess the damage she has received. You may be assured that the members of the commission will act in the spirit of complete neutrality, and that you will be given all the time necessary for repairs to make you seaworthy."

He gave a little bow, and the Germans rose. Guani rang a bell on his desk which sounded in the ante-room. A harassed secretary opened the big double doors. Langsdorff gave a Naval, the Ambassador a Nazi, salute accompanied by the unnecessary words: "Heil Hitler."

In the ante-room, the Germans passed a tall, elegant figure in evening dress. It was Mr. Eugene Millington-Drake. The secretary announced to Guani, "His Excellency The British

## MICHAEL POWELL

Millington-Drake came in like a man sure of his welcome. He had known Dr. Guani since the 1914 War, when Guani was already a Minister and he was a very young Secretary. And their relationship was somewhat in the nature of a diplomatic uncle and nephew. So it was with an affectionate smile, deprecating the formality of his words, that he said, as he advanced across the big room, "Señor Ministro! The Uruguayan Government with its well-known democratic principles will act in accordance with International Law and intern *Graf Spee* for the duration of the war, will it not?"

Guani's eyes twinkled and he put his head on one side as he answered blandly, "Sit down, my dear boy."

The doors, which had barely closed, opened again and a secretary announced, "His Excellency The French Minister!"

Monsieur Gentil entered, bearing an impressive, red-sealed Note in his hand. He bowed to Guani and said, "Monsieur le Ministre." Then he looked across at Millington-Drake and said, "Ah! Cher collègue!" and bowed again. Millington-Drake bowed gravely in his turn. They had parted only twenty minutes before. Guani, from his desk, looked appreciatively from Millington-Drake back to M. Gentil, who now advanced and offered him the red-sealed envelope with a murmured apology for the lateness of the hour.

Guani took the envelope in his hands and turned it over reflectively. Then he looked enquiringly at the French Minister, "Another Note, I suppose?"

Gentil spread out his hands, "By the terms of the Hague Convention——"

Guani interrupted him, throwing up his hands in gentle mockery, "Ah! That much-quoted Hague Convention! Article Seventeen says: 'Warships of belligerents may not make repairs in the ports and roads of neutrals beyond those necessary for safety at sea; and may not increase in any way the fighting efficiency of the vessel.' The Other Side have also quoted the Hague Convention and I assured them, as I do you, that we

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

need no prompting in our duty as neutrals. The Hague Convention will be observed."

Millington-Drake coughed and said, "Señor Ministro. May I draw your attention to the fact that since the battle, *Graf Spee* has already sailed three hundred miles?"

"At top speed!" shouted his excitable ally. "Mon Dieu! Elle a couru comme un lapin!"

Guani yawned politely and said, "Gentlemen. Since midnight—and it is now ten to four—I have received three diplomatic Notes from the German Ambassador, two from the British Minister and two from the French. We are a small country which has imposed upon itself the heavy burden of Neutrality. Do not, I beg of you, make it any heavier."

There was no more to be said. The Ministers bowed and took their leave. Dawn was in the sky.

Mike Fowler had seen the sun rise many times in his life, but usually when he was going to bed. On this occasion he was up and about long before the dawn. In the chilly hour before the sun rose, when the calm waters of the River Plate were no longer dark but the colour of lead, Mike, driving his station-wagon and followed by three trucks belonging to the Telephone Company, came bumping along the empty beach and outside Manolo's. The place was shuttered and dark. On the ramshackle terrace, with its superb view over the harbour and city and out over the River Plate, the telephone engineers started to unload equipment, run out cables, and hook themselves up to the telephone system by land-line, so that Mike could talk direct to New York. For he had got his commission from the recording-company, it was going to be a nation-wide hookup, and the sky was the limit! Everything depended now upon getting the best viewpoint in Montevideo, and that was what Manolo had.

Manolo's hangs on the side of the Cerro, the hill which dominates Montevideo. Outside the Harbour, the broad expanse

## MICHAEL POWELL

of the River Plate stretched as far as the eye could see, broken only by two rocky lumps, reefs rather than islands, on one of which stood a lighthouse and on the other the old quarantine station. Just before sunrise Mike thought he could make out a plume of smoke and two black dots which could be the two British cruisers, but when the sun rose, a great orange shape, strangely squeezed by mirage into the shape of an hour-glass, they had vanished. Mike may have been right. Harwood was so determined that night not to lose contact with the *Graf Spee* that he closed both cruisers to a few thousand yards from the Harbour entrance during the hours of darkness and withdrew them out of sight as soon as the skies started to lighten.

Up to Montevideo, the river is deep and navigable with the usual shoals and banks clearly charted, but above the city the channel is buoyed and has to be dredged for vessels of deep draught. For this reason the Argentine Naval base is at Bahia Blanca; and for the same reason the British, from their base at Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands, have always made Montevideo their main port of call in South America; and since they have always been well-received they have come to regard it as practically a British harbour.

Some of these thoughts were passing through Jock McCall's mind, a few hours later, as he flew from Buenos Aires to Montevideo in the seaplane which flies regularly every morning and afternoon between the two cities. Buenos Aires being a full Embassy and Montevideo only a Legation, the Naval Attaché's headquarters were at B.A., although many of his problems arose at Montevideo.

McCall knew the course of the seaplane by heart and had taken the precaution to seat himself on the starboard side so that he had an excellent view of the *Graf Spee* lying in the Outer Harbour.

Now, as they passed over the moles and docks black with people, as he saw the hundreds of boats and small craft which were thronging the Harbour, and thousands of people on every

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

sensation the arrival of the Pocket battleship had caused and what an important international drama, in which he was to be one of the chief actors, was developing before his eyes. The plane banked round. They were only a few hundred feet up and directly beneath him was the terrace of Manolo's bar. It was swarming with people, but he could see that a radio commentator was already installed with his microphone and sound-vans, and he wondered idly how he had managed to establish himself so early in such a unique position.

If Mike could only have known, one of the biggest sensations of the whole adventure was about to break upon the world, which until now knew nothing of the existence of Captain Dove and his fellow-prisoners on board the *Graf Spee*. The British Consul had been warned that she was carrying English prisoners and a tug had been ordered to take them ashore. But no visitors except the official representatives of the Uruguayan Government and Navy, and the German Ambassador, were allowed on board the Pocket battleship. Compared with the battered condition of the *Exeter* the damage to the *Graf Spee* may have been superficial and her casualty list low, but at a period in history when Germany, with her subject-states, was the greatest Power in Europe, it would have been unthinkable to allow other less-subservient nations to see that she was as vulnerable as the rest of the human race.

This illusion of absolute power and the necessity of preserving it, influenced every move of the Germans in the political battle that was to be waged during the next four days; and since, in a totalitarian State, the politicians call the tune, and compose it as well, they also influenced every decision Langsdorff had to make. It is as well to remember this during the events that led up to the final tragedy.

The sea, with its traditions and its stern realities, is not a good breeding-ground for politicians and their slogans, but the canker was there in the *Graf Spee*, and during the next fateful days in harbour, it fed upon doubt and flourished upon dishonour. At

## MICHAEL POWELL

followed anywhere. They had been shipmates for four months. They had lived together, triumphed, and fought in battle together. They were still a closed community. They were that wonderful thing, a well-worked-up ship under a Captain whom they trusted. So they had toiled all night cleaning up, making everything ship-shape, patching the holes with canvas and painting them over, cutting away wreckage and concealing damage, rigging awnings and ladders, until at breakfast-time orders were given for every man to see to his personal appearance before turning in, while the Captain, his Officers, and the watch on deck, still sleepless, shaved and dressed in the formal dress of the day to receive the first official callers. It was a transformed ship, trim with huge, snow-white awnings and gay with flags, with pipe-clayed ropes and with canvas and carpets underfoot, that met the eyes of Dove and his fellow-prisoners when they were finally allowed on deck with their bundles under their arms. They were fit enough, but pale from their long confinement, and they blinked in the bright sunlight. Their old shipmates, Lieutenant Hertzberg and the Master-at-Arms, escorted them for the last time. They looked wonderingly at the tall buildings of Montevideo against the blue sky of early summer, at the crowded shipping around them, and shook their heads in silent amazement. It was only weeks later that they would find words to describe their experience and its dream-like ending. To the reporters, who later besieged them on shore, they had disappointingly little to say. They did not belong in this ship, but they did not belong anywhere else, and it would take days of freedom to wake them from their dream.

A messenger came and spoke to Hertzberg who said: "Captain Dove! Our Captain wishes to see you."

Dove had not expected the summons, but he found that he had been waiting for it. He nodded, gave his bundle to Stubbs to hold, and followed Hertzberg to Langsdorff's harbour cabin. Once more Dove and Langsdorff confronted one another and each man thought it was for the last time. The German Captain



## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

solemnly returned his gaze. Langsdorff looked tired and pale. He wore his formal white uniform with epaulettes; his belt, with the small-sword of the German Navy, lay upon the table ready to be assumed. He had managed to get his wounded left arm into his tunic and only a certain stiffness betrayed it. His scalp-wound and the wound on his chin had been cleverly cleaned and dressed, but he had shaved off his dapper little beard and it made him look much younger. His manner, too, had changed: behind his eyes there was a constant question.

Now he looked at Dove's honest face and forgot the troubles pressing on him in the pleasure of their personal relationship. It was with an echo of their previous meetings that he said, "Well, Captain Dove."

Dove answered gravely, "Well, Captain Langsdorff!"

Langsdorff's charming smile played across his sensitive face and he stepped quickly forward, holding out his hand. Dove took it and Langsdorff said with friendly warmth, "I'm glad you're all right."

With equal sincerity Dove replied, "Thanks for everything. You've done your best for us and I can only wish you the best for yourself."

Langsdorff thanked him and sent his good wishes to the other prisoners. He was insistent that Dove should not forget to wish them well on his behalf. Then with a sudden thought he added, "Wish them a happy Christmas! Yes. A happy Christmas."

For a moment his thoughts were far away. Then he returned to the present with a jerk and said, "Is there anything else I can do for you?"

Dove nodded slowly, "If you wouldn't mind, sir, could you tell me the names of our ships that engaged you?"

Langsdorff's eyes flickered and he answered, "There were three of them: the *Exeter*, the *Ajax* and another of the same class. I think it must have been *Achilles*."

Dove said anxiously, "What happened? Were any of them sunk?"

Langsdorff shook his head. "... We badly damaged the

## MICHAEL POWELL

*Exeter* but she was still afloat the last time I sighted her . . . we could have fought two of your ships, but three was too much for us."

Dove said gently, "What shall you do now, Captain?"

For the first time in their relationship Langsdorff spoke unnaturally. He straightened up and answered, as if he were making a statement for publication, "I have asked the Uruguayan Government to let me carry out necessary repairs. These things are governed by International Law. There is a Technical Commission on board now. My galleys have been wiped out, my store-rooms shot away. I cannot feed my men."

He hesitated, then added in the same tone, "I am not going to take my men out to sea to commit suicide."

Suddenly he recollected to whom he was talking, drew himself up and said rather formally, "Well, I suppose you have to go?"

Dove nodded. Langsdorff picked up two black cap-ribbons printed with *Admiral Graf Spee* in letters of gold, which had been lying on his chart-table, fingered them for a moment, then suddenly handed them to Dove, saying, "Take them . . . from the caps of two of my men who fell in battle . . . souvenirs!"

Dove took them and held them in his big hands, and said slowly, "Thank you—very much."

The door opened and Captain Kay came in. He nodded to Dove and said to Langsdorff in English, "The Uruguayan Technical Commission have finished their inspection and are about to leave."

Langsdorff nodded and called his servant, who appeared and helped him to buckle on his belt and sword. Dove stood waiting to say good-bye, but Langsdorff seemed almost to have forgotten his presence. Then, as he picked up his cap, he saw him and said, "Good-bye, Captain. We are not likely to meet again."

But he was wrong.

The Technical Commission consisted of the two officers who had visited the ship the night before: Captains Varela and



## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

Fontana. Although their report and their recommendations were vitally necessary to Langsdorff, a good deal of the damage had been concealed from them. For this the Gestapo and Dr. Goebbels' propaganda-machine were responsible. German pride and prestige were at odds with the hard facts. The Commission was hurried by much of the damage: much else was already camouflaged. They had seen little the night before and their main impression had been of the human casualties, the sight of the dead and wounded. Great play was made now for their benefit of the damage to the galleys and store-rooms, and nothing was said about the far more serious damage to the evaporators. The few hits that could not be concealed, particularly those near the water-line, were dismissed as superficial by the Germans themselves. By the time the Commission took their leave, they believed in all good faith that the damage was far less than in fact it was.

Both on their arrival and at their departure, they were treated with the respect and formality that one Power owes to another on such occasions. However much the German Ambassador ashore might try to bully Dr. Guani, Captain Langsdorff, as a sailor who had been reared in the traditions of the Imperial German Navy, knew how to conduct himself. He and his Officers formed up on the quarter-deck beside the gangway and there was a Guard of Honour. After saluting the Commission, Langsdorff chatted a moment with Varela. He said that his ship would need a fortnight in port for repairs. He wanted to know how long they would allow him and said that the life of the ship depended upon it.

It has already been described in what way Varela had formed different conclusions. He respected Langsdorff, but not knowing all the facts he saw no reason to change his opinion. He answered Langsdorff that it was not in his power to say how long a time would be granted. He could only report to his Government who would then make their decision. Langsdorff nodded and stepped back to his Officers. The two parties saluted

## MICHAEL POWELL

each other again, the Uruguayans went over the side and returned to the *Lavalleja*, where they stood to attention once more and saluted as the corvette drew away.

After the seaplane from Buenos Aires had landed, McCall took a taxi to the British Legation. He found Millington-Drake with all the books on International Law spread out on the desk in front of him and, at the moment when the Uruguayan Technical Commission was going ashore, the British Minister was expounding his tactics.

"It all comes down to this: according to International Law, no belligerent warship can stay in any neutral harbour longer than twenty-four hours without being interned. After that everything turns upon the Emergency Clause. If the Germans want to apply it and ask for time to carry out repairs to make the ship seaworthy, I shall resist it with every pressure I can bring to bear."

McCall asked, "I suppose the French will help?"

"Certainly. You can be sure of that. We consult together on every move we make—but we make the moves separately." He smiled. "You know Monsieur Gentil, don't you? The prestige of France is quite safe in his hands. Of course the ideal thing would be for Uruguay to stick her toes in and threaten to intern *Graf Spee* after twenty-four hours, which would drive her out to where Harwood is waiting for her. But I'm afraid there's no hope of that. They're bound to grant an extension. How long depends upon the Commission's report."

McCall said thoughtfully, "I wish I could be sure what Harwood wants. Any news of the *Cumberland*? That would make things a bit more even."

H.M.S. *Cumberland*, a three-funnel cruiser, had been heard of last on the eve of the battle cleaning boilers in the Falkland Islands, and was not expected to be in service again for at least ten days. She was the nearest capital-ship to the River Plate and, with her eight-inch turrets, would certainly make a formidable addition to Harwood's small force.

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

keeping wireless silence. As you know, the Admiralty ordered her up from the Falklands yesterday afternoon. But I suppose, at the most optimistic guess, she couldn't be here before the weekend, could she?"

"Afraid not," grunted McCall. "But you haven't answered my question. Will H.M. Government put enough pressure on Guani to throw the *Graf Spee* out?"

"You're asking a good deal," said Millington-Drake drily, "but you can count on us to do our best. There are Notes going every hour, of course—from both sides. Meanwhile the report of the Technical Commission is being considered. The crucial interview between Guani and Langmann is at seven o'clock."

It was true that the utmost pressure was being brought to bear by the Allies upon Uruguay to turn the hunted ship out. Equal pressure was being brought to bear by Germany to let her stay. The alternative was internment. Uruguay's wish, on the other hand, was to get rid of her unwelcome visitor as quickly and as politely as possible. But although a strict interpretation of International Law meant that the *Graf Spee* must sail at the end of twenty-four hours (after sunset on that very evening), there were also the decencies of international relationships to be observed. Although German influence was very strong in South America, particularly in Uruguay's nearest neighbour across the River Plate, the Foreign Minister was a man of great personal and moral courage, and could be relied upon to implement his country's decision with strict impartiality and as firmly as if he had been the Foreign Minister of a great Power. Since Uruguay was a well-governed country, his colleagues knew this and, having reached a decision, left him to handle it alone.

At a few minutes before seven that evening Dr. Langmann and Captain Langsdorff were waiting in the ante-room. Guani's buzzer sounded and the secretary went in. There was a murmur of voices. The two Germans waited patiently. Neither looked at the other; there was nothing to discuss. Precisely at seven o'clock the secretary reappeared, opened the doors wide and

## MICHAEL POWELL

Dr. Guani had already risen to receive his visitors. Langmann gave a flip of his hand, à la Ribbentrop, which passed for a Nazi salute to a small nation, and said, "Señor Ministro. You have already met Kapitan Hans Langsdorff, Commandant of the *Admiral Graf Spee*."

Langsdorff saluted. Guani bowed and said, "Please sit down, gentlemen. Let's forget formalities."

Langsdorff flashed him a quick smile but continued to walk quickly up and down as if he were on a quarter-deck, at some distance from the two politicians. Langmann sat down carefully on the same uncomfortable sofa and said, "Your Excellency is well aware of the facts."

Guani took him up smoothly, "Let me see if I have got them right." He put on his glasses, searched on his desk, and, finding a particular paper, read it aloud, "Early yesterday morning, off Punta del Este, a Naval battle took place. The German Pocket battleship, *Admiral Graf Spee*, was engaged by three British cruisers, the *Exeter*, the *Ajax* and the *Achilles*. In the course of this engagement, the German battleship gained a victory. The British cruiser *Exeter* was seen to be shot to pieces and the other British cruisers fled. The *Graf Spee* herself received a few minor hits——"

Langsdorff abruptly stopped his quarter-deck walk and looked meaningly at his Ambassador, who hastily interrupted: "That is not correct."

"No?" said Guani.

"No," was the firm reply, "The *Graf Spee* has suffered serious damage. She is not seaworthy."

With an air of astonishment, Guani exclaimed, "But I am quoting the official communiqué of your own Government, quoted by your own official agency, the Deutsches Nachrichten-bureau, issued today at 13.15, Greenwich Mean Time."

Langmann forced a smile at the Minister's little joke and explained laboriously, "Your Excellency knows that official news in wartime has to take into consideration the psychology of the

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

people, the maintenance of morale, the—but, of course, Your Excellency is joking.”

Guani smiled politely and waited to see if the German Ambassador was going on, but he said no more. So the Foreign Minister turned in his chair and addressed Langsdorff, who had remained silent and motionless during the fencing-match between the two diplomats. It was a direct question that Guani put to him: “Captain Langsdorff, how would you assess the damage to your ship?”

Langsdorff thought carefully before he answered, “My galleys have been destroyed. I cannot feed my men. As for other damage . . . you have sent a Technical Commission on board and I have shown them everything.”

Guani nodded and, still addressing himself directly to Langsdorff, replied, “I have their report. How much time would you say was necessary to make you seaworthy?”

It was a straight question calling for a straight answer. Langsdorff knitted his brows and made some quick calculations. Before he could answer Langmann cut in quickly, saying firmly, “My own assessment is two to three weeks.” He paused and then repeated with meaning emphasis, “At least two weeks.”

Guani said, “My Commission suggests forty-eight hours.”

The blow was a direct one. Langmann nearly had a seizure. Langsdorff said sharply, “Your Excellency! There are sixty-four hits on the superstructure alone!”

Guani looked calmly down at the report in front of him and answered, “Sixty-five.”

The two Germans exchanged a look of utter amazement. The little Foreign Minister rose and, in the most formal tones, said: “In view of this report and of your Government’s request to extend the twenty-four hour period under the Emergency Clause of the International Agreement, my Government has decided to grant an extension of seventy-two hours in order to render your ship, the *Admiral Graf Spee*, seaworthy, the time-limit to expire at 8 p.m. on Sunday the 17th of December—”

MICHAEL POWELL

Presb. Board of Foreign Missions

He paused. Langmann had made a sudden violent movement forward. He would have spoken, but Guani held him with his eye, and without raising his voice or altering his tone, continued, "—but prohibiting, in accordance with the Articles of the Thirteenth Hague Convention, any repairs for the purpose of increasing the fighting strength of the vessel."

Langsdorff listened with bowed head. He said nothing. For him it was a death sentence.

Langmann looked at Langsdorff and back at Guani. He tried to speak and could find no words. He was in a situation which had not been envisaged by his superiors, and he could see no way out of it. Himself a bully, he was completely unprepared for the knock-out blow which his small adversary had just given him. It was in a strange, heavy voice that the German Ambassador said at last: "I most strongly protest!"

Guani answered coldly, "I note your protest," and rang the bell for his secretary to show the two visitors out.

After they had gone, he walked to the window and stood there thinking, his hands behind his back. The sun was setting and the lights were coming on in the city. It could have been a symbol of the event in history which had just taken place. For a long time Guani stood there, his mind full of many things, as the room faded into darkness, while out on the broad bosom of the River Plate the shadowy forms of the two Hunters closed silently in.

The final event of that eventful Thursday came at 2200 hours, when aboard *Ajax* the lynx-eyed Swanston, who could apparently see as well in the dark as he could in the daytime, reported, "Bearing Red Three-Eight. A dark object. Bearing Red Three-Eight."

The two cruisers had closed Montevideo Harbour in company to a distance of about four miles, so that they could be sure to detect the *Graf Spee* if she sailed. They were steaming at cruising stations about eight cables apart. The night was dark but clear, and visibility with glasses was about two miles—for normal



## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

four miles away. It was quite impossible for *Graf Spee* to have slipped out, but this ship, if ship it were, approaching from the south-east and showing no lights could only be a warship.

Although at cruising stations, Captain Woodhouse was on the bridge.

At Swanston's words, every glass on the bridge of the *Ajax* was levelled to starboard and the gun control-tower started to swing round. The report was confirmed. It was a large ship approaching from the south of English Bank. Meanwhile Harwood, having been informed of the presence of a strange ship, came on deck. Woodhouse gave a quiet order, "Alarm Starboard. Prepare to challenge."

To the Yeoman of Signals he said, "Make to *Achilles*: 'Alarm Starboard, Bearing Red Three-Eight. A dark object'."

Shaded lights started to wink between the two ships and their gun turrets swung round. The tension was almost unbearable as everyone strained their eyes through the darkness to identify the approaching vessel. In the control-tower the Gunnery Officer reported, "Target!" over the voice-pipe to the bridge, and gave the order to the turrets to load and come to the Ready. Harwood stood close to Woodhouse, with his eyes to his glasses like everybody else. All this had taken not much more than a minute. "Guns" reported in a low but clear voice, "Captain, sir! Ready to open fire!"

Woodhouse glanced at Harwood, who nodded, and replied, "All right, Guns." Then to his Yeoman, who was standing like a terrier at his elbow, he ordered, "Challenge!"

It was a breath-taking moment. The Yeoman had in his hand the same shaded directional signal lamp with which he had been signalling *Achilles*. He raised it and, sighting the strange vessel, he made a short signal. The clicking of the lamp sounded unnaturally loud in the breathless hush which had fallen. He stopped. The reply might easily be a full broadside. "Guns" put his thumb on the firing bell. Then through the darkness a lamp started to wink in reply.

The message was in English and was as follows:

MICHAEL POWELL

"*CUMBERLAND* TO *AJAX* SORRY BUT I'M A STRANGER HERE."

At the same time the G.C.T. reported that the strange object was identified as a three-funnel cruiser.

After the first roar of relief and amusement, Harwood said, "It's a miracle!"

Woodhouse nodded. "Miracle or not, sir, we can certainly do with her."

"Ask her how the blazes she managed to steam a thousand miles in thirty-five hours," exclaimed Harwood, who still couldn't believe that he had another eight-inch cruiser here in the River Plate under his command. The signal was made and acknowledged.

"*Cumberland* answering, sir," reported the Chief Yeoman.

The Captain of the *Cumberland* was a master of the laconic style, as was proved by his answer:

"ANTICIPATION."



# V

## Men and Ships

EVERY NIGHT DURING the long watch off Montevideo, Harwood closed his ships into the Harbour and then drew off at dawn to a distance of about forty miles. With three ships again under his command, he felt for the first time at his ease.

Work was going on by day and night on the *Graf Spee*, and the big ship was surrounded by tugs, floating cranes and lighters.

The Uruguayan papers were full of rumors planted by the British of a vast Naval Force assembling outside the River Plate to bottle up the *Graf Spee*. The names of *Renown* and *Ark Royal* were freely mentioned as well as half a dozen other capital ships. But description of the mounting drama in Montevideo, tended to be dominated more and more by one voice—the voice of Mike Fowler.

"It is now nearly a quarter after nine, folks, here in the great city of Montevideo on this evening of Saturday, the 16th of December. There must be half a million people milling around in sight of me at this very moment. They are thronging the quays and jetties of the Harbour, they are crowding the beaches, and the roofs of all the tall buildings in the city—and while I watch still more are coming to see the next act in this unique drama of the *Graf Spee*. I have been talking to these citizens of Montevideo, and I have several of them standing here right beside me to give you listeners exclusive news of what is happening behind the scenes. Here, for example, is Señor Casuelo who is a gardener at the German Embassy. Step forward! Señor Casuelo! Say a few words to the million of listeners in the United States. . . ."

But after a long pause all that the eager listeners heard was a sepulchral "Hello," followed by a torrent of apologetic Spanish off-mike. Mike hastily cut in again. "Señor Casuelo assures us that when Captain Langsdorff, the Captain of the *Graf Spee*,

## MICHAEL POWELL

bassador were talking to Berlin and, probably, to Herr Hitler himself. These high-level political discussions are still going on for, with the recent news that the British and their Allies are concentrating vast forces at the mouth of the River Plate, the fate of the German Pocket battleship, the *Pride of the German Navy*, hangs in the balance. . . .”

“Now it’s more than an hour since the sun sank beneath the waves of the River Plate, but it’s still quite light and the lightest spot of all is round the vast bulk of the Pocket battleship, *Graf Spee*, where work is going on by night as well as by day. I have had my glasses on her all the afternoon and evening. There has been a great deal of activity. At one point I could see hundreds of officers and men assembled on the after-deck. . . . Some sort of meeting was taking place but nobody knows what was decided at it. Nobody knows what was said to Herr Hitler today or what will be said tonight. But there is a constant traffic of launches and lighters between the Pocket battleship and the *S. S. Tacoma*, the German merchant-vessel which was in Montevideo when the *Graf Spee* arrived, and is now lying a few hundred yards away from the battleship . . . I can’t make out whether the launches are bringing stores on board the *Graf Spee* or whether they are taking them off. . . . What’s that, señor? What can you see? Oh, yes . . . I’ve just been told that the *Graf Spee* is transferring heavy equipment into the two tugs which lie alongside. Of course! That’s the welding equipment from Buenos Aires with which she has been repairing her scars of battle. Folks! The *Graf Spee* is transferring her welding equipment. That means she has finished repairs! That means she is ready to sail! But when? Her only chance is to make a dash for the open sea under cover of darkness. And she can only do that by breaking International Law. Today, at six o’clock in the evening, a British cargo boat left Montevideo Harbour and, according to the Twenty-Four Hour rule which is applied by neutral nations, she must be given twenty-four hours’ grace to get clear before a belligerent warship can sail after her. So the *Graf Spee* cannot legally sail until six o’clock tomorrow.

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

evening, that is to say only two hours before her time-limit, set by the Uruguayan Government, expires. These are the legal aspects of the matter. But I am standing right here in Montevideo, in the middle of this great drama of the sea, and I can tell you, folks, that International Law is one thing and Captain Langsdorff's personal position is another. The facts are that the *Graf Spee's* engines and armament are virtually undamaged. She is still one of the fastest and most powerful battleships afloat. She is still in a position to make a dash out to sea at any time that suits her and the British Admiral, Admiral Harwood, is well aware of this. Night and day, every hour, every minute, the question upon everybody's lips and in everybody's minds is—will the *Graf Spee* dare to come out?"

There was very little sleep for anyone on Saturday night. With the fall of darkness, the three British cruisers closed the Harbour until they could be sure to detect the *Graf Spee* if she were to sail. But there was no sign of it. She still rode at her moorings. At three a.m., Langsdorff came ashore, went to the German Embassy and spoke once more and for the last time to Berlin. It was then that he received his final orders.

At dawn of the day upon which his quarry must sail or be interned, Harwood withdrew his small force forty miles down-river, out of sight. It might be for the last time. The decision was not in his hands. He could hope for no further reinforcements before Tuesday but that did not worry him. His only concern was to see that the *Graf Spee* did not slip through his fingers. To avoid this meant constant vigilance, day and night. Since the *Graf Spee* was still there, moored in the Inner Harbour, and the time-limit expired at sundown, the issue was plain: she must either be out of territorial waters by 8 p.m. or be interned: a simple dramatic situation whose significance the whole world could easily grasp, particularly through the agency of Mike:

"Ladies and gentlemen, it is Sunday morning, 10.15 the 17th

## MICHAEL POWELL

*Graf Spee* will expire. To be exact, at 8 p.m. local time, she will have to be out of territorial waters or the Uruguayan Government will intern her. It is rumoured that outside the mouth of the Rio de la Plata there are five, possibly seven British warships waiting for her. Another rumour says that the Germans, too, are sending reinforcements, so that a Naval battle even greater than Wednesday's is imminent. We figured that the *Graf Spee* would make a run for it last night during darkness but she is still here this morning. Throughout the night her Captain, Captain Hans Langsdorff, worked with the Nazi diplomatic authorities towards one of Germany's most important decisions since the war began. Will he take the battered vessel out of the haven of the River Plate? Will they make a dash for Buenos Aires, four hours steaming up the channel? Will it be a fight to the death? Nobody knows. An hour ago Captain Langsdorff returned to his ship. He had spent many hours ashore. The German Minister, Dr. Langmann, accompanied him to the quay and, as they shook hands, was heard to say, 'Until tomorrow.' Naturally he said it in German. I am giving you a translation of his words. . . ."

The tireless voice went on and on, vivid, resourceful and penetrating until it seemed as if the whole world were listening to Mike's words. Admiral Harwood certainly was. An elaborate system of espionage, and the transmission of news via the Falkland Islands and the Admiralty had been worked out many months before, but by an irony of science it was Mike, broadcasting to America, re-transmitted to the B.B.C. and thrown out again to the rest of the world all in a matter of seconds, who kept the British Admiral informed, not only minute by minute, but almost second by second, of his enemy's action and intentions. In a matter of seven seconds, Mike's voice bounced round the world and came back to every man in the three British ships over a rough hook-up to their loudspeaker systems.

The three ships were far apart patrolling the mouth of the Plate, off the English Bank, and maintaining contact by sight.

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

was a glorious day and very hot. Harwood and Woodhouse were both on the bridge, listening like everyone else to the voice of Mike. Medley brought a signal to Harwood who read it, touched Woodhouse's arm and jerked his head towards the starboard range-finder. It stood in a little wing on the side of the bridge and was a good place for a private talk. Swanston, having nothing else to do and being incapable of idleness, was polishing the brass with pitiless zeal. Harwood said, "Buzz off, Swanston," and stepped up on to the platform where Woodhouse joined him. He passed him the signal with the words, "From our Ambassador in Buenos Aires." It read 'Strong rumour current here that *Graf Spee* will sail tonight.'

Woodhouse nodded, handed back the signal and said, "So she is coming out."

Harwood grunted, "Is she? What would you do if you had the *Graf Spee* under your command?"

Woodhouse always liked a plain question. He turned the answer in his mind and then said slowly, "Well—I'd come out as soon as it was dark and try to dodge the ships that were waiting for me outside, and get to the open sea again. And if I failed to dodge them, I'd fight to a finish. Isn't that what you would do, sir?"

Harwood nodded slowly. "Sounds simple. I wonder if it sounds that simple to Langsdorff?"

"Why not?" asked Woodhouse and he sounded genuinely surprised.

After a moment Harwood replied like a man thinking aloud. "He's got plenty of headaches . . . Headache number one: he doesn't know what force we've got out here. Headache number two: he can let himself be interned in Montevideo, but Uruguay might come into the war later on, on our side, and then the *Graf Spee* would fall into our hands. . . . Of course, he might make a dash for B.A., but the channel's narrow and muddy—if he fouls up his water intake he'd be a sitting duck. . . ."

Suddenly he made up his mind and stuck his fist on the edge of the steel bridge. "Well, He'll come out!"

## MICHAEL POWELL

Woodhouse said quietly, "When do you think he'll move?"

"Now! . . . at noon! . . . at sunset! . . . anytime! He can choose his own time. But he's lost the value of surprise because that fellow will tell us every move he makes."

He jerked his head towards the loudspeaker on the bridge which was now playing a samba.

Suddenly the music stopped and Mike's voice came again over the air. "Flash! Mike Fowler reporting from Montevideo. General opinion here is that it is quite possible that the Pocket battleship will make a dash to another neutral port . . . to Buenos Aires . . . or Bahia Blanca . . . keeping in territorial waters all the way. . . . Activity is intense around the *Graf Spee*. She has now rigged a canvas awning over her starboard gangway, presumably to hide whatever it is she's loading into the tugs which are sailing continuously between the warship and the S.S. *Tacoma* . . . a gentleman has just been telling me that the *Graf Spee* is transferring dozens of men—I beg your pardon, señor? Oh, thank you! Si. Comprendo. Correction! The *Graf Spee* is transferring hundreds of men to the *Tacoma*. They are carrying their kit and as soon as they go on board the *Tacoma*, they are being sent below out of sight. . . . I can assure you, folks, although we can follow every move, none of us can tell what is going to happen. The suspense here is unbelievable. The best guess is that the *Graf Spee* will sail with a skeleton crew, I might call it a suicide crew, to do as much damage as possible against hopeless odds."

It was now midday and Sunday dinner-time, which is as serious in Montevideo as anywhere else and considerable more lengthy. Sunday dinner in Latin-American countries is followed by the sacred hour of the siesta, and not even the *Graf Spee* could cut into that. Gradually the quays and beaches, the jetties and roof-tops, and even Manolo's bar, emptied. Mike yawned and stretched himself and looked around. Except for a few children and loafers there was no one in sight.

Only on the *Graf Spee* busy figures moved to and fro, busy



## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

and launches continued to pass between the battleship, the shore and the *Tacoma* and—yes! a working party was starting to strike the awnings. Suicide crew or not, she was getting ready to sail.

But out of sight of Mike a great deal of activity was taking place and, in particular, one meeting which was to have important effects upon the history of the Western Hemisphere. This was the meeting on Sunday afternoon at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to which Dr. Guani summoned all the diplomatic representatives of the American continent. (South Americans use the word "Americano" to include North and South America).

It is interesting to recall the frame of mind of North and South America at that time. From his Geneva experience, Guani knew the value of collective action, and he knew also how to strike when the iron was hot. This moment, when the Western Hemisphere was still reeling under the effect of finding itself in the battle area, was the moment to crystallise opinion and to concert action. He concealed nothing from the assembly. Lucidly and frankly, he set forth to them the attitude of the Uruguayan Government and their reasons for it. Dr. Guani would have been listened to with respect at any time, but the fact that while he was making these revelations no one present really knew what was going to happen at eight o'clock that evening, gave added importance to every word he said and held his listeners tense from first to last. It must have been an extraordinary meeting. There was food for thought for many of those present when the Foreign Minister mentioned the pressure brought to bear upon him by both Governments, by His Majesty's Government as much as by Herr Hitler's, and said that, at certain moments, it had been quite intolerable. Then, with a smile, he admitted that the pressure from the British had been slightly more tolerable because exerted through the tactful personality of his friend Millington-Drake. . . . The admission brought a smile from the uneasy assembly, for they

MICHAEL POWELL

Presb. Board of Foreign Missions

joke brought no easing in the tension and the realisation that something must be done. It will be remembered that a few weeks later all the American countries, including the United States, published an Agreement stating that any Naval combat within a very wide belt of the American coasts (some two hundred miles and clearly defined) would be an open breach of neutrality.

By the time the meeting was over, it was six o'clock and the siesta was over too. Once again crowds were starting to pour on to the beaches and the quays, and the loudspeakers that were turned on in every room and by every window, and were even patrolling the streets, were beginning to blare the latest news and rumours of news. Mike's voice could be heard clearly by Millington-Drake on the eighteenth floor of the Palacio Salvo, where he had gone with his family and personal staff to see what could be seen. From there, high up on the balcony, the three small dots of the British cruisers were clearly visible on the horizon but not to Mike several hundred feet below and going at it hammer and tongs.

"Here I am, folks, reporting from my water-front ringside seat at Montevideo. I had to go off the air just now because the crowd was so immense they broke my microphone cable. However, thanks to the gallant police of Uruguay order has been restored and the line has now been repaired. As you know, the time-limit for the *Graf Spee* to be out of territorial waters was 8 p.m. local time, and it is now 6.50, just over an hour to go! And she hasn't moved yet. It is hard to describe the scene here as tension mounts by the minute. The sun is sinking fast but it is still bright sunshine here in Montevideo, and visibility is about twenty miles. But the waiting British warships are out of sight. The latest rumour says that thirteen Allied warships, including the *Renown* and the *Ark Royal* are waiting outside. . . ."

"Good old McCall!" said Woodhouse, "He did his stuff."

The three cruisers were moving at twelve knots up the river, in line abreast with the Flagship. As sunset approached, Har-



## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

Stations. The next hour was the decisive one they all realised. As seamen, they knew from the continuous reports of activity throughout the day that something would happen that evening. The general opinion was that the *Graf Spee* would come out with a reduced crew of volunteers for a death-ride!

When Woodhouse spoke, Harwood glanced at him but made no reply. It was a moment of decision for him too. Mike's voice went on over the loudspeakers.

"The tugs and lighters have cast off. One of the tugs is nosing up alongside the *Graf Spee*. There are men working now down on the buoy. I believe they are casting loose her moorings. Yes! I believe she has started her engines. I can see the slight churn of her propeller in the water!"

Harwood said suddenly, aloud, "All right, Woodie. Here we go! Chief Yeoman! Make to *Achilles* and *Cumberland*: 'Form Single Line Ahead'."

But although he had taken his decision, Harwood still listened to Mike. He couldn't help it. Nobody could help it. For these short glorious hours, Mike had become one of the most important people in the world. His persistence, his vitality had ended by mesmerising everybody. He stopped everything. He started everything. He dictated policy and reversed it; it seemed that it was he who sent the British cruisers on to eighteen knots and started the *Graf Spee's* diesels turning over. And still the tireless, hypnotic voice went on.

"The sun is sinking. . . . The evening is fine and clear. . . . The crowds gathered here on the beaches, on the quays and on the roof-tops would put the Army and Navy football crowd to shame. . . . All afternoon we have watched men being transferred to the S.S. *Tacoma* . . . there can only be a suicide crew left on board. . . . A moment ago we heard, for the first time since Thursday, the sound of the *Graf Spee's* engines. . . . Now her diesels have started again . . . her mooring is cast off . . . her anchor is being raised . . . there is black smoke coming out of her funnel. . . .

## MICHAEL POWELL

noon seems to have lost its voice as well . . . everybody is watching in silence. Now! . . . No! . . . Yes! . . . No! . . . Yes! Ladies and gentlemen, the Pocket battleship *Graf Spee* is moving! Yes, she's moving! . . . the great battleship is moving, moving out from the Harbour under her own power. The steamship *Tacoma* is following her."

It was extraordinary how impressive the great ship looked moving slowly and majestically out of the harbour. Now she was nearing the Outer Breakwater, and the *Tacoma* was following her at a few cables distance. Now she had passed the mouth of the Harbour and was in the deep channel leading to Buenos Aires. Mike's voice cracked with excitement as he reported the fact. It looked as if she were going to make the dash into another neutral harbour which he had prophesied. Then, when she was some miles out, she turned eastward and headed towards the British cruisers whose smoke was now visible on the horizon. The sun was rapidly sinking and the time was about 7.30. The *Graf Spee* appeared to be barely outside the three-mile limit when Mike reported to the world that she had stopped!

She lay there without movement on the calm waters of the Plate as the minutes ticked by. For a while the whole world was in suspense, then Mike reported that first one and then two other launches had left the side of the *Graf Spee* and were heading towards the *Tacoma*. Through his glasses, he could see that the launches were full of men.

It was 7.55. On the vast calm expanse of the River Plate the battleship lay motionless. The sun had nearly gone.

At the very moment when it disappeared beneath the waves, a tremendous explosion was heard and an inferno of fire shot up out of the *Graf Spee*. Great columns of smoke rose into the air while again and again new explosions occurred. On the shore people screamed with horror and excitement. A great inarticulate roar of sound filled the whole city. More and more explosions

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

burst from the doomed vessel. The whole of her armament seemed to be blowing up. In the space of a few minutes she was blazing from stem to stern. Mike clung to his microphone, shrieking and stammering, trying to describe the indescribable, to convey the unconveyable. "Another explosion! . . . and another! Smoke is pouring out of her. Flames! Red and yellow flames. . . . Listen! You can hear the thunder of the explosions from here. It's fantastic! . . . A gigantic witch's cauldron of fire . . . !"

On the bridge of the *Ajax*, everybody, even Harwood, was silent. Harwood's face became red then white. Suddenly he walked to the front of the bridge and rested his head on his hands. Nobody said a word. Far, far away, dead ahead of them a great pyre of black smoke was mounting into the sky. Over the loudspeakers on the ship Mike's voice was still stammering and shrieking, while behind him could be heard again and again the screaming of the crowd and the thundering of the explosions from the dying ship. At last Harwood turned and looked at Woodhouse, his eyes red, his voice hoarse as he said, "Well, Woodie. That's that."

Woodhouse said quietly, "Yes, sir."

Harwood collected himself. All eyes were upon him now. He stepped forward and said, "Chief Yeoman! Make to *Achilles* and *Cumberland*——"

He thought for a moment, composing the words in his mind, and then said, "Make to *Achilles* and *Cumberland*: 'Many a life has been saved this day.'"

The Yeoman saluted in silence and went to make the signal.

As darkness fell the sight of the great ship burning became more and more terrible. She was still being rent and torn apart by vast explosions while her whole length was a roaring mass of flame. The water all around the ship was boiling and bubbling. As the ammunition caught fire in different parts of the vessel, whole chains of explosions would go off one after the other. Masses of metal hurtled into the air and fell into

## MICHAEL POWELL

the boiling sea. Pieces of the steel superstructure broke off and came crashing down. The battleship had been lying in shallow water and was already settling down on the mud with her back broken. Her decks were awash. And still the explosions tore at her and dismembered her, and she seemed to shudder where she lay. She was to burn for three days.

The *Tacoma* lay about half a mile away, surrounded by the launches of the *Graf Spee*, a tug from the Argentine and several open lighters into which the crew of the *Graf Spee* were being transferred. The dark shapes of the ships were lit up by the lurid glare from the burning *Graf Spee*. The sound of the explosions drowned the shouted orders in Spanish and German. It was a strange, wild, uneasy scene. A Uruguayan gun-boat came racing up to the vessels, her searchlights trained upon the *Tacoma*. Beside the Commander on the little bridge stood Captain Dove. The Commander called over the loud-hailer, "Captain! Captain *Tacoma*!"

A heavy German voice answered, "Hier!"

"I am ordered to detain you in the name of the Republic of Uruguay! You have been actively helping a belligerent warship in Uruguayan territorial waters——"

"I protest! This is a merchant vessel! It is not on my country's War Reserve."

"You have left Harbour without clearance papers and without a Pilot. You are under arrest. Send over your launch!"

There was a moment of consultation on the bridge of the merchant-ship. Finally, the Captain answered, "Very well. What do I do with all these officers and men?"

"You can bring them back to be interned," was the answer, "Or you can send them to Argentina to be interned there, which is, I believe, your intention. Is Captain Langsdorff on board?"

A tall figure which had been standing on the lower deck of the bridge of the *Tacoma* now came forward and called out, "Yes!"

## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

"I am coming on board you!"

The Commander and Dove transferred to the launch and went on board the German ship. They climbed to the lower bridge. The tall figure of Langsdorff stood there, his back half-turned to them, his eyes on the burning ship in the distance. Meanwhile, the business of putting a guard on board the *Tacoma* and getting the *Graf Spee* sailors transferred into the lighters proceeded. The Commander saluted and said, "I have orders not to detain you, Captain Langsdorff. Nor any of your men."

Langsdorff saluted and nodded at the words but made no reply. Dove stepped forward and said, "Captain Langsdorff."

Langsdorff turned with a start. Their eyes met. There was a long pause. At last he said, "Well—Captain Dove!"

Dove said, "They let me come out to see you. I was glad to come. Things have changed a bit for you since we said good-bye four days ago. . . ." He paused.

Langsdorff said abruptly, "Yes," and continued to look at him.

Dove stumbled on, "I had sort of unofficial orders to come and see you—because there is a rumour in Montevideo that you perished with your ship."

Langsdorff looked at him for a long moment, then turned and moved across to the rail before answering, "The safety of my crew comes first."

But Dove had not finished what he had come to say. He moved a little closer to the Captain and said in his deep, gentle voice, "I want you to know, Captain, that everyone on shore who has come in contact with you respects you very much . . . and—I can only say this as a private person, of course—even your enemies."

Langsdorff nodded slowly. Dove persisted, "I am sorry to see you in this situation . . . and alone."

Langsdorff had turned once more to look at his blazing ship. "Every commander is alone, Captain," he answered. Suddenly

## MICHAEL POWELL

he turned and, holding out his hand, took Dove's and shook it warmly. "Good-bye," he said, "This time it is good-bye . . . and thank you."

In the early hours of December the 20th, in his room at the Naval Arsenal in Buenos Aires, Captain Hans Langsdorff wrapped the flag of the Imperial German Navy around him and shot himself. He had seen his men safely to the capital of Argentina where they had been received with all the honours due to men who had fought bravely, and who were now fugitives seeking shelter. Quarters were found for them for the first few days in the Naval barracks. Later on they were moved to an internment camp up-country, but it was a light and honourable internment. Many of the crew remained in Argentina after the war; most of the officers escaped under the light surveillance during the next eighteen months and, by devious routes, found their way home to fight again.

But their Captain whom they had followed through triumph and battle into exile and disgrace lay buried in foreign soil, while his ship which he had destroyed with his own hand settled deeper and deeper into the mud of the River Plate.

The initial mistake of seeking shelter within the River Plate had been his; but when once he had deserted the tradition of the Navy and had allowed a politician's dirty hand to guide the destiny of his ship, when he had allowed the simple issue of "Come out and fight—win or lose" to be in debate, when he had accepted and obeyed Hitler's shameful orders to scuttle his ship and intern his men, then, being the man he was, he had ended his career and had nothing more to live for. Being the man he was he had first seen his men to safety. A lesser man, guided by the same traditions and principles and making the same decision, would have feared to meet the eyes of his men during the next forty-eight hours and, at Buenos Aires, the inevitable questioning by reporters, the endless interviews with Ambassadors and Consuls, the glances of scorn from



## DEATH IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

have gone down with his ship. Not so Langsdorff. He had told Dove that a Commander is always alone and no man was ever more alone than he was during those final hours.

During the dreadful hours of that Sunday which followed the return to his ship before dawn after his final telephone conversation with Hitler, he assembled his principal officers, gave them their orders and, with characteristic thoroughness, saw that they were carried out in every gruesome detail. His orders had been to destroy his ship utterly and beyond possibilities of salvage: an almost impossible task with a heavily-armoured ship like the *Graf Spee* which was virtually unsinkable. All day long while the rest of the crew was being evacuated to the *Tacoma*, men were toiling below decks to prepare her for her end. Magazines were emptied of their deadly cargo which was distributed all over the ship. On every deck high explosive shells were stacked in beds of cordite. Charges were laid to every fuel tank. Hose-pipes were connected to tanks of petrol and diesel-oil so that, at the turning of a cock, the decks would be flooded with inflammable liquid.

The huge crowd of half a million people who watched her sail an hour before sunset little suspected that the magnificent ship which left the Harbour so calmly and majestically and made her way out into the waters of the River Plate, was a vast floating bomb timed to explode at 7.55, five minutes before the time-limit allowed by the Uruguayan Government expired. Over each ammunition hoist on the port and starboard sides, the war-head of a torpedo was suspended, operated by a time fuse which, at the appointed second, would send the ton and a half of metal and explosive plunging down five decks to explode in the magazines and send a column of flame and blast half a mile into the still air. It was no longer a ship but a vast funeral pyre, a sacrifice to colossal egotism which Captain Langsdorff left behind him, floating in the River Plate, as he boarded the last launch to leave the *Graf Spee*.

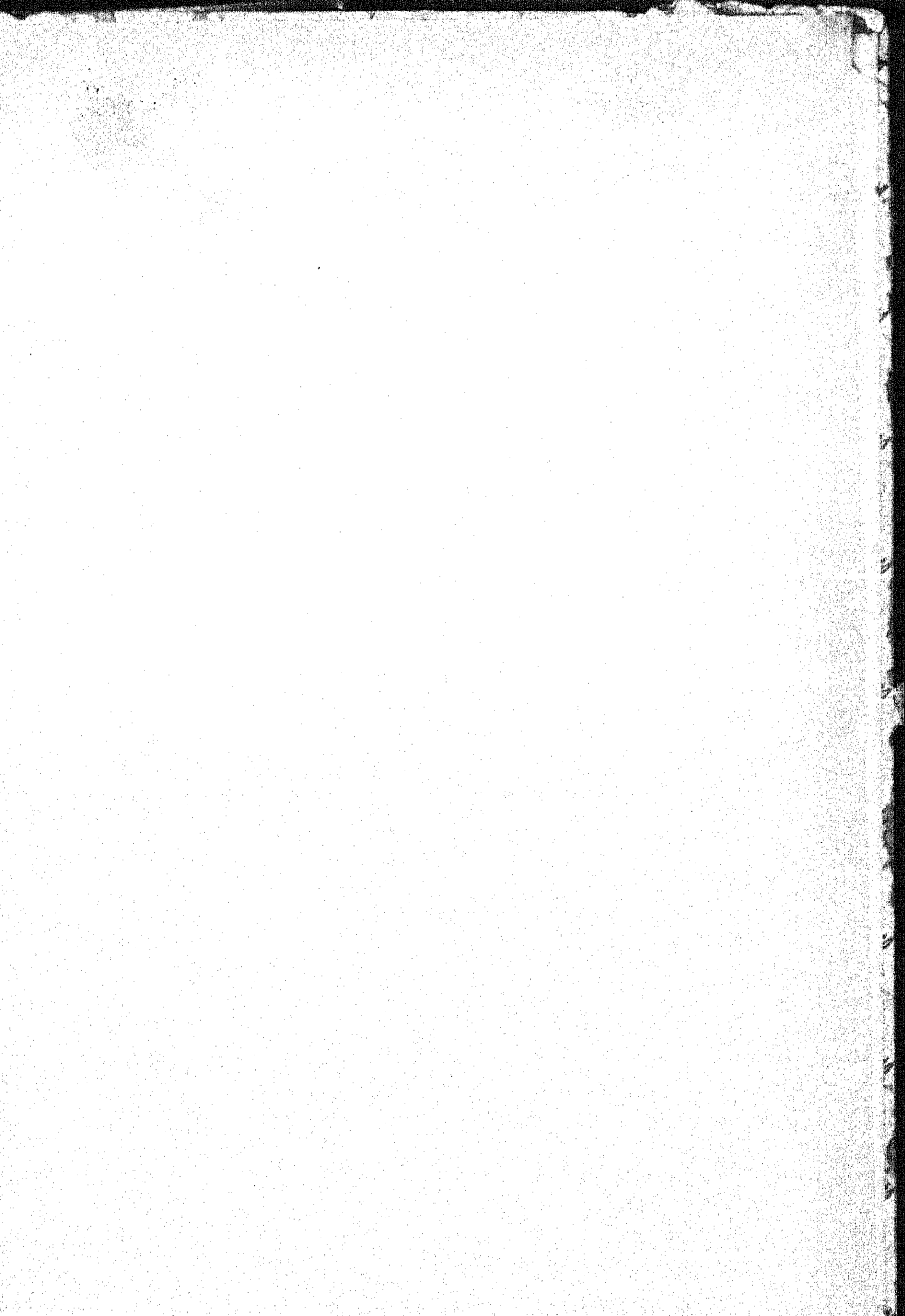
Such was Hitler's solution for saving German face in the

## MICHAEL POWELL

been turned by luck and daring into a German victory was converted to an ignominious defeat. Propaganda fed and flourished on the theatrical gesture, and the issues and decisions which caused it, the responsibility and the blame, the truth of the matter remained and has remained obscure to most of the world until this day. But by the political stroke he condemned a loyal and faithful servant to death and a fine ship to an ignominious end. He dealt a mortal blow to the traditions of the German Navy which its Admirals had been at such pains to build up, and he destroyed their confidence in him. Warships may be regarded by politicians as instruments of policy, but they are not political instruments to the men who man them and command them. They would not remain long afloat if they were. So when the *Graf Spee* did not come out to fight, but scuttled herself instead; when Langsdorff paraded his men in the Naval barracks at Buenos Aires and addressed them briefly, reassuring them of the arrangements for their welfare, thanking them for their loyalty and comradeship and bidding them farewell; when he gave a dinner that night to his officers, laughing and toasting the ultimate victory and bidding them sleep well until the morning; and when he tossed the Nazi flag on one side and wrapped himself in the German flag before putting a bullet through his brain, the German Navy needed no further explanation. It understood only too well Hitler's solution and it did not like it. It was the first of a number of such solutions which were to occur to the German Führer, the last of which was acted out in the Berlin Bunker in 1945, when he perished amid the ruins of all that he had created, cursed by the people who had idolised him and haunted by the ghosts of ten million men and women whom he had personally caused to be slain.

*Quem deus vult perdere prius dementat.*





## MICHAEL POWELL

been turned by luck and daring into a German victory was converted to an ignominious defeat. Propaganda fed and flourished on the theatrical gesture, and the issues and decisions which caused it, the responsibility and the blame, the truth of the matter remained and has remained obscure to most of the world until this day. But by the political stroke he condemned a loyal and faithful servant to death and a fine ship to an ignominious end. He dealt a mortal blow to the traditions of the German Navy which its Admirals had been at such pains to build up, and he destroyed their confidence in him. Warships may be regarded by politicians as instruments of policy, but they are not political instruments to the men who man them and command them. They would not remain long afloat if they were. So when the *Graf Spee* did not come out to fight, but scuttled herself instead; when Langsdorff paraded his men in the Naval barracks at Buenos Aires and addressed them briefly, reassuring them of the arrangements for their welfare, thanking them for their loyalty and comradeship and bidding them farewell; when he gave a dinner that night to his officers, laughing and toasting the ultimate victory and bidding them sleep well until the morning; and when he tossed the Nazi flag on one side and wrapped himself in the German flag before putting a bullet through his brain, the German Navy needed no further explanation. It understood only too well Hitler's solution and it did not like it. It was the first of a number of such solutions which were to occur to the German Führer, the last of which was acted out in the Berlin Bunker in 1945, when he perished amid the ruins of all that he had created, cursed by the people who had idolised him and haunted by the ghosts of ten million men and women whom he had personally caused to be slain.

*Quem deus vult perdere prius dementat.*

